

THE
**LABOUR
MONTHLY**

A MAGAZINE OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR

Editor : R. PALME DUTT

Volume 19

December, 1937

Number 12

**DANGER
SIGNALS**

in

**British
Politics**

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THE LABOUR MONTHLY

A Magazine of International Labour

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New Plans for 1938

That the times are critical every reader of the LABOUR MONTHLY is aware.

The storms of war are rising on all sides. Capitalism is plunging into new instability and barbarism. Fascism, encouraged in aggression and consolidated in a world bloc, is extending its attack from Spain and China to armed conspiracy against the French Republic. The British ruling class, led by the National Government, is showing its hand ever more openly as the accomplice of reaction and fascism.

This situation throws a heavy responsibility on the British Labour Movement, and on every organ which endeavours to fulfil its duty of leadership in these times and meet the problems which face us all.

The LABOUR MONTHLY can claim to have played its part in helping to arouse the movement to a sense of danger. In the recent period its campaign after the Edinburgh Conference of the Labour Party, and the articles from leading Labour representatives on that débacle, evoked a remarkable response, testified in the several hundred letters received, and helped to mobilise the opinion which, guided by the Unity Campaign, led to the beginnings of partial advance at Bournemouth.

New tasks and new issues now lie before us. All these require an extended circulation of the LABOUR MONTHLY.

To give the LABOUR MONTHLY a still wider appeal, to make it a more competent weapon in the hands of the militants, at whose service it has always primarily been, the moment has been judged appropriate for the modernising of its format and typography.

January, 1938, will therefore see the LABOUR MONTHLY in a new and improved type dress, cleaner, more readable, more efficient for its job, together with a striking newly-designed cover.

We look with confidence for the result in increased circulation during the coming year.

EDITORIAL BOARD.

NOTES OF THE MONTH

*Dangerous Signs — British Political Situation — After Bournemouth—
Premature Jubilations—Ugly Realities—National Government's Policy
—Open Reactionary Moves—Labour Alarm—"Monstrous and
Disgraceful"—"Mystery" of British Policy—Where It
Leads—Rôle of Municipal Elections—Election Lessons
—1934 and 1937—Menacing Losses—Hard Facts—
Contrasts — Where Unity Won — Curve of
Gains and Losses — Fascism's Future
—Urgent conclusions*

EVENTS of the past month show that an extremely dangerous point is being reached in the British political situation. Not the least of this danger consists in the fact that its character is scarcely yet realised by Labour and democratic opinion in this country. The moods of joyous optimism after the Bournemouth Labour Party Conference, as if everything were now taking a turn for the better, are still widely prevalent. The results of the municipal elections have been widely hailed as a victory. Meanwhile the real picture is an ugly one. The British National Government since Bournemouth, and still more since the municipal elections, is moving to more open reaction in its world policy than ever before. The Triple Pact of the three fascist Powers, Germany, Italy and Japan, for world expansion in the name of "anti-Communism," is the open formation of a War Bloc for the new division of the world. Its formation throws the shadow of threatening world war over every country. At this moment Britain, by its recognition of Franco, by the strangling of the Brussels Conference, by the Halifax mission to Berlin immediately after the announcement of the Triple Pact, is actively assuming a rôle which ranges its influence for the immediate present, on the side of the fascist bloc. British policy is engaged in taking decisions which will govern the future of the world.

IT is evident that in this critical juncture world issues depend on the internal situation in Britain and the strength of the forces against the National Government. And at this moment the municipal elections in Britain have shown that the Labour movement, so far from

making the progress needed, is losing ground in many vital parts of the country outside London, and can not yet count on even reaching the level of 1929, still less to defeat the National Government. This is the hard reality behind the results of the municipal elections. It is not often that local elections may be said to have, not only a national, but an international significance. But this applies, as with the recent French local elections, which tested and proved the continued strength and growth of the People's Front, still more to the recent local elections in Britain, which deserve the most careful study for the light they throw on the present political situation in this country. *To awaken opinion to the warning these municipal elections convey is now urgently necessary, if the lessons are to be drawn which can alone change this situation.*

A CHORUS of pæans and hosannas has followed Bournemouth in official Labour expression. The end of defeat, the end of divisions, the triumph of unity and new advance has been proclaimed. On October 15, in an editorial entitled "Advance," the *Daily Herald* solemnly cancelled its statement of a year ago that "Labour's dynamic drive forward as a national force stopped in 1929 ; since then it has on balance held its ground, but no more."

The Party is moving forward again. . . . We said in this column a year ago that Labour's forward drive as a national force had ceased in 1929. The remark was unpalatable, true and much quoted.

It is true no longer. It is hereby withdrawn. Labour is out of the bogs and the marshes. Its feet are on solid ground. It has resumed the advance.

A fair and fine result. Let the lesson be learnt. The lesson is unity.

It is impossible to exaggerate the part played in the recovery of the Party by the new unity which emerged so strongly at Bournemouth. . . . The days of weakness and disunity are over. (*Daily Herald*. October 15, 1937).

Fair words—if they were true, if unity had been achieved. Undoubtedly the beginning of advance which has been realised from the extreme depression is the reflection of the impact of the Unity Campaign, which forced through changes at Bournemouth, and of the growth of local unity in spite of bans. But unity has not yet been achieved. If it had been, the results of the municipal elections would have been very different.

BEHIND this orgy of premature self-congratulation and unseemly complacency lie two factors. First, the sense of a change from Edinburgh, which reveals to-day, at least in official expression how deep was the wound that Edinburgh dealt to Labour. Second, and more serious, the desire to treat all issues as now closed by Bournemouth, as if the minute partial concessions of Bournemouth had solved all problems and official policy can now settle down once again to a stupor of self-satisfaction on a basis of reactionary politics and a divided movement. Herbert Morrison writes, with revealing reference to Edinburgh :

Labour's Conference at Bournemouth was a very welcome change after the 1936 assembly at Edinburgh. . . . The name "Edinburgh" sends a shiver down the backs of Labour people, whereas the Conference at Bournemouth makes them all cheerful and smiling. . . .

It was a misery to be at Edinburgh (and a worse misery to be a member of the Executive !) but it was a joy and inspiration to be at Bournemouth. (Herbert Morrison in *Forward*, October 23, 1937).

The trade union press strikes the same note :

In the history of the Labour Movement the Bournemouth Conference will go down as one of the most positive, determined and constructive Conferences ever held. . . . It may as well be admitted that from 1931 the spirit of the Party appears to have been at a very low ebb. . . . The Edinburgh Conference concluded with an undeniable sense of despondency ; but the Bournemouth Conference clearly and definitely revealed a new courage, a new optimism, a new unity which will revitalise the whole Movement. (General and Municipal Workers' Journal, November, 1937).

WHAT is the measure of the change since Edinburgh which is thus now officially heralded as a complete transformation ? Undoubtedly there has been a change. But in so far as change has been realised, the impartial historian will have to recognise that that change has in fact developed as a direct consequence of the Unity Campaign, which, arising in reaction against the disaster of Edinburgh, gave new life to the movement, created the pressure that compelled the changes towards democratising the election of the Executive, gave new forces of leadership into the Executive, and forced through the Spain Campaign, demanded and denied for over twelve months, that is now giving new heart to the Labour fight. All this is to the good. It is a beginning of achievement, and a foretaste of what can be achieved,

once real unity and a fighting policy have been realised. But it is necessary to keep a sense of proportion and face hard facts. The main fight has still to be fought. In the main fields of policy, on working class unity and on support of the Government's arms policy (inevitably involving in practical effect, despite disclaimers, its foreign policy), Bournemouth continued the line of Edinburgh to a still more reactionary stage. *And the consequence is that, while the songs of jubilation are being sung in official Labour circles, the real political situation is serious in the extreme.*

THE hard fact is that the National Government since Bournemouth has felt its hand strengthened to pursue far more openly its reactionary policies. Not for nothing has every Government Minister publicly welcomed the decisions of Bournemouth. Before Bournemouth the National Government had entered into the Nyon Agreement, which marked at any rate a step towards collaboration with France and the Soviet Union against the pirate Powers. At Geneva Eden united with Delbos in giving pledges to Spain that further resistance by Italy to the demand for withdrawal of troops would be met by "drastic action"—*i.e.*, support for France in opening the Pyrenees frontier. After Bournemouth a sharp change followed. The pledges were thrown overboard. British pressure was used to prevent France opening the Pyrenees frontier. On the Non-Intervention Committee the question of withdrawal of foreign troops was turned by the British Plan, with Italian support, into proposals for according belligerent rights to Franco. When this was checked by the firm stand of the Soviet Union, Britain moved independently to the recognition of Franco by the exchange of agents ("it is much more than a recognition of belligerent rights," declared Franco's official communiqué, "because the recognition of belligerency is much less important than the recognition of sovereignty implied in the conclusion of this agreement"). Hard on this followed the Triple Pact, Chamberlain's welcome to it in his Guildhall speech, and the decision to send Halifax to Hitler.

THE sequence of dates is important, not least in relation to the signal of the municipal elections. On November 1 (November 2 in Scotland) took place the municipal elections. They were universally regarded as a national test of strength. They revealed that Labour was in no position nationally to lead a successful offensive against

the National Government. Immediately on November 4 the Government announced its decision to recognise Franco by the exchange of agents. On November 6 followed the Triple Pact of Germany, Italy and Japan, following in quick sequence Britain's move to recognise Franco. On November 9 Chamberlain in his Guildhall speech, directly after the Triple Pact had proclaimed its challenge to every democratic country and to any organisation of peace, went out of his way to make overtures, no longer merely to Germany and Italy separately, but explicitly to "the two great Powers now so closely associated in what is known as the Berlin-Rome axis" and to express the desire of the Government for "a basis of mutual friendship and understanding" with this "axis" (now grown, according to Hitler, to a "world political triangle") *i.e.*, with the fascist bloc. On November 11 the agreement with Franco was signed. On November 12 the Government announced its decision to send the Halifax Mission to Berlin, with the possible sequel of a visit to Rome. On the same day the Nazi Press, which had greeted Chamberlain's speech with enthusiasm and found in the British Premier "a man of sound common sense," took the opportunity to proclaim the aim of detaching the Ukraine from the Soviet Union. Meanwhile an Italian envoy was in London to negotiate a British loan to Italy, while the Foreign Office was opening negotiations with Franco's agent on the possibility of a monarchist restoration in Spain. British policy was no longer "vacillating," as the official Labour critics had so often complained. It was acting with considerable promptitude and decisiveness—but not in the direction anticipated by the jingo speeches at Bournemouth.

A DIM flickering of recognition that something has gone wrong has begun to percolate even the most ardent champions at Bournemouth of support for the National Government on armaments. The previous official view had ruled out as fantastic the possibility that a Tory Government could use the armed power, so generously accorded it by Labour, on the side of fascism against the democratic forces. "Do you really believe," demanded Sir Walter Citrine at the Norwich Trades Union Congress, "that any British Government would dare to pledge the forces of this country behind the Fascist Powers?" The same view was still set out in the official monthly organ of the Labour Party in November :

The risk that the National Government will use these arms to assist the fascist States is infinitesimal. (M. Philips Price, M.P., in *Labour*, November, 1937).

But by November an element of doubt had begun to creep in. The Secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen, Mr. Marchbank, one of the main protagonists of the policy of supporting the National Government on rearmament, was by November 5 proclaiming in his journal his alarm at the "profound alteration in the Government's foreign policy" since Bournemouth:

It seems to me that a profound alteration is taking place in the Government's foreign policy. . . . British policy, instead of weakening the ties between the two dictator countries, has strengthened those ties. It is the anti-fascist bloc that has been divided and weakened.

Another illustration of the same mysterious trend is furnished by the attitude of the Government towards Japan's infamous aggression in China. . . . What line is going to be taken by our Government? We can infer it from the reference in the King's speech and from the speeches of Ministers. Those references foreshadow, in my opinion, another betrayal of China.

Neither in Spain nor in China can our own Government be depended upon to act strongly in defence of freedom and independence against the criminal attempt of predatory Powers to destroy both. (J. Marchbank, in the *Railway Review*, November 5, 1937).

The fruits of Bournemouth are being found unexpectedly bitter, though the connection of cause and consequence is not yet seen.

"**M**ONSTROUS and disgraceful" was the verdict of the *Daily Herald* (which a few weeks earlier, on September 21, on the eve of Bournemouth, had been applauding the National Government's "powerful appeal to sanity and common sense" at Geneva) on the decision to recognise Franco. On October 21, less than two weeks after Bournemouth—and it is worth comparing this utterance with the character of the speeches on arms at Bournemouth—the Leader of the Labour Party was finding it necessary to declare in the House of Commons:

The Government were making for war all the time. Their policy was not only wrong but stupid. It was dictated first by fear of Communism: they thought Japan would be a useful counter to Russia in the Far East and that Germany would be useful in the West. Secondly, they feared the success of a State which was founded on different principles from their own. That accounted for their sympathy with Hitler,

Mussolini, the rulers of Japan and General Franco. They all represented the defenders of property.

(C. R. Attlee, M.P., in the House of Commons, October 21, 1937.)

Yet to this Government Labour has decided to accord arms for the "defence of democracy," according to the Executive speeches at Bournemouth.

IN fact the policy of the National Government is not so "mysterious" as Mr. Marchbank finds. Basically it is the same policy as was being pursued before Bournemouth; only the tempo has quickened, and Bournemouth has played its part in making possible this quickening of the tempo. British policy is not unaware of the ultimate menace of the Triple Pact to the British Empire as the richest world spoils, despite the cover of "anti-Communism" as the convenient pretext for any and every aggression. This awareness was expressed in the editorial of the Conservative *Daily Telegraph* on November 8, which found that "peace at the present time has most to fear from the embattled and allied enemies of Bolshevism. . . . Indeed, France and Great Britain might be excused for believing that their concern in this anti-Bolshevik Pact was more direct than that of Soviet Russia." But Britain still calculates on the possibility of making a deal with the Fascist Powers, on the basis of handing over Central and South-Eastern Europe to German domination and the main spoils of the Far East to Japan, and in this way to save its own colonies at the expense of other countries, without having to weaken the rôle of fascism as the bulwark of reaction. Moderate Conservatism sees thus the hope of a breathing space, with the British Empire and the fascist Powers peacefully dividing their respective spheres, while Britain completes its armed preparations for the inevitable future imperialist conflict. The more reactionary circles continue to speculate hopefully on a German-Japanese attack on the Soviet Union, and see in the backing of such an attack the final use of British rearmament. Both sections unite in the present practical policy of a close approach to the fascist Powers.

WHERE this policy leads in practice the record of six years has already shown on a cumulative scale. It means continuously enlarging war, while fascism is able to pursue its policy of dealing with its victims one by one, and on the basis of each previous success to advance to a new and extended attack. It means in this

way the continuous strengthening of fascism, the weakening and disruption of the potential forces for peace, the piecemeal destruction of democratic institutions and independence in country after country, the addition of new reserves and satellites for fascism, until at last in this way *through the British policy* a real balance and division of two blocs is created in place of the initial inferiority of the fascist forces, and fascism, thus strengthened and reinforced by British aid, is able to advance and launch its plans of world war under the maximum unfavourable conditions for the democratic and anti-fascist forces. This is the road along which the policy of the National Government, if unchecked, is leading the world. It means, not only the surrender of democracy and peace in the present, but the certainty of world war in the future. The price of every month of this policy grows heavier.

THIS is the situation which gives such urgent significance to the present inner political relations of strength in Britain. It is against this background that we need to read the barometer of the municipal elections and draw our conclusions. The French municipal elections in October put the People's Front to the test. Every force of reaction inside and outside France was mobilised to defeat the People's Front. The situation was all the more unfavourable in that the weaknesses and errors of the Chautemps Government, largely imposed through the pressure of British foreign policy and the offensive of British finance-capital in alliance with French finance-capital, had created legitimate dissatisfaction which every attempt was made to exploit. Yet the People's Front, thanks to the united stand of the Socialist and Communist Parties, together with the majority of the Radical-Socialists, stood firm and even increased its hold. The vote of the People's Front rose from 57.5 per cent. of the total in the General Election of 1936 to 58.9 per cent. in 1937. If we compare these figures with our own, and if we bear in mind the far more favourable situation in this country for a successful opposition offensive against a reactionary Government in power, what must we say of the results of the municipal elections in Britain and the situation of weakness they reveal?

IT is a symptom of blindness to these realities of the political situation that the *Daily Herald* and official Labour expression should have found it possible to hail the results of the municipal elections as a great

“victory.” The argument runs that the previous contests, according to the triennial system, of the councillors vacating their seats at this election were in 1934, which was a year of Labour advance by a record net gain of 305 seats in the provinces and 472 seats in London ; that therefore “to have held those gains would have been a remarkable achievement,” and that to have increased them by 54 in London and an estimated net gain of 20 in the provinces could accordingly be regarded as a victory and a legitimate cause of self-satisfaction. It is worth noting that, whereas a year ago the *Daily Herald* in its analysis of the check to Labour’s dynamic of advance between 1931 and 1936 did not regard the gain of 777 seats in 1934 as contradicting this basic analysis, the gain of 74 seats in 1937 is now regarded as decisive proof of advance. But in fact the argument cuts the other way. For it is entirely based on the assumption of normal times, of gradual minute gains to be extended peacefully over a limitless period. It entirely fails to take into account the transformation of the situation between 1934 and 1937, the far more urgent stage reached and the transforming events between 1934 and 1937 which should have led to an overwhelming Labour advance. Contrast France in 1934, with the reactionary Doumergue and Laval in power and the attempted fascist coup, and France in 1937, with the People’s Front, with trade unionism multiplied five times, and with the representation of the working class parties more than doubled. Contrast the United States in 1934 and 1937, with the million-fold increases in trade unionism through the Committee of Industrial Organisation and the victories of the forty-hour week. And then compare this satisfaction with a position of relative stagnation in Britain between 1934 and 1937, leaving reaction securely entrenched.

ABOVE all, this argument ignores the actual relation of forces. The situation requires the rapid mobilising of a majority of the population to defeat the National Government. The municipal elections this year were universally regarded as a national test of strength for a future general election. From that standpoint how can we regard the results ? To defeat the National Government it will not be sufficient to reach the peak Labour vote of 1929, where the representation obtained, though still a minority, was inflated by the number of triangular contests, and Labour had not yet to meet the “national” concentration of the capitalist camp. A very considerable and widespread increase will be needed above this level. Yet the Labour vote in recent by-elections,

including Springburn and North Islington, has not been merely below the level of 1929, but even below the level of 1935. And the municipal elections have only confirmed this menacing picture. In London alone, where there has been the principal positive record of Labour activity and leadership during recent years through the Labour County Council, where the Communist Party is strongest and is able to play a leading rôle in the activity of the London working class, and where there has been a high degree of united co-operation of members of all sections in practice, there has been a definite advance, even though insufficient. The Labour vote has risen 6 per cent., and registered an absolute majority of 355,000 out of a poll of 679,000. But in the country as a whole outside London, including England, Wales and Scotland, there has been no such advance, and in many areas there have been serious losses.

THE most menacing feature of the municipal elections is the series of Labour losses in a number of the most vital industrial areas, the conquest of which is indispensable for any Labour majority, and many of which were in the past dominantly Labour. The Labour headquarters claim of a net gain of 20 over the country as a whole outside London conceals the real picture. In fact, if it were not for the winning of new seats in outlying backward areas where Labour was coming forward for the first time and at the beginning of breaking ground, the real picture would show a net loss. Gains at the spas of Bath and Cheltenham, or at holiday resorts like Colwyn Bay and Eastbourne, cannot compensate for the menacing losses in the decisive areas of Lancashire, the Midlands, Wales or elsewhere. The situation in these governs the question of a future majority against the National Government.

LANCASHIRE was a record of disaster, which will need the most careful enquiry into the situation. Net losses were registered at Liverpool (8 seats), Bolton (6 seats), Birkenhead (3 seats with loss of the Council), Bootle (3 seats), Oldham (2 seats), Blackburn (2 seats), Manchester, Salford, Rochdale and Preston. But Lancashire, though the most extreme, was not alone. In the Midlands net losses were registered at Birmingham (3 seats), Stafford (4 seats), Wednesbury (2 seats with loss of the Council), Leicester, Stoke, Swindon. In the North there were net losses at York, Barnsley, Chesterfield, Newcastle, Sunderland,

Barrow. Wales registered net losses in Cardiff and Newport. In Scotland the Dundee Council was lost. Any Labour organiser or leader who can regard this picture with satisfaction in relation to a future general election has not begun to face the realities of the desperately urgent problem of the Labour Movement in this country to-day.

BUT a further survey reveals the most important practical conclusions to be drawn from the record. For in fact the picture also in the industrial areas is characterised by a marked unevenness, and the character of this unevenness is significant. The contrast between London and the rest of the country, and its importance, has already been noted. In London two new councils were gained, Lambeth and Hammersmith. It is impossible to fail to note that Lambeth is the seat of Strauss, who has been one of the most active leaders of the fight for working-class unity, and Hammersmith is the seat of Pritt, another supporter of unity. Similarly in the country one of the most striking victories was the conquest of the Bristol Council, the constituency of Cripps, where the fight for unity has received active local Labour support. Contrast the debacle in Liverpool, where the leader of the Labour Party, Hogan, had been engaged just before the election in a virulent polemic against Cripps, and against unity. And even in Liverpool it would be possible to trace how, in the midst of the general debacle, candidates in certain wards who had actively supported unity or spoken in association with the Communists, secured big increases in the Labour vote (*e.g.*, Abercrombie, Everton and Fairfield Wards).

SIMILARLY in Scotland the Dundee disaster followed expulsions of members of the Trades and Labour Council under the notorious Woodburn Circular for supporting unity. On the other hand, in Edinburgh and Aberdeen, where a high degree of united co-operation was achieved, and in both of which towns the Communist Party has recently played a leading part in the workers' struggle, victories were recorded. In Edinburgh, where Communist and Labour representatives spoke from the same platform in the campaign, there was an increase of 9,000 votes with two seats gained. In Aberdeen there was a net gain of two seats ; and the Chairman of the Borough Labour Party declared at the meeting of the Trades Council on November 10 :

The unity that had been achieved in this election by the working class political parties had been largely responsible for the success, and had definitely proved that no power on earth could resist the united forces of the working class.

SIMILAR examples and tributes could be repeated from many parts of the country. After making all allowances for exceptions and special conditions due to local circumstances the general tendency is unmistakeable. Over the country as a whole the curve of Labour gains or losses was proportionate to three closely associated factors : the degree of militancy and activity of the local Labour leadership, the strength or weakness of the Communist Party in the locality, and the degree of united action and co-operation achieved. Where the local Labour leadership was able to show a record of activity and to put forward a challenging vigorous programme, and where this was accompanied by joint activities and co-operation between all sections of the working class movement, including the Communist Party, important advances were made. On the other hand, where opposition to unity and a militant policy was strongly marked, there the level of voting was exceptionally low and serious setbacks resulted. There is here a lesson which no serious Labour supporter, who really wishes for a Labour victory, can fail to take in most earnest consideration.

CAREFUL attention needs also to be paid to the warning of the votes recorded by the Mosley-Fascist candidates. Here also the treatment of the *Daily Herald*, which on the strength of one or two preliminary results, complacently spoke of the " rout " of the fascist candidates, can only be regarded as frivolous and irresponsible. The fact that in East London Fascism should be able to secure a vote of 18 per cent. of the total in Limehouse, 16 per cent. in South-West Bethnal Green, 18 per cent. in North-East Bethnal Green, and 24 per cent. in Mile End, is an extremely serious fact. It is fortunately true that all the fascist candidates were defeated ; but the passivity of the Labour Movement in East London in recent years has given them this foothold, and they calculate on the future development of economic depression and crisis to enable them to extend their advance. What is menacing is not merely the actual fascist votes (which outside London were still minute), but the signs of stagnation and decline of the Labour vote in the country as a whole, and the extreme lowness of the poll in the majority of areas. These

are the conditions, inevitably arising when there is lacking a united militant Labour Movement to take the lead, which open the way to degeneration and decay and the advance of fascism. This also points to the extreme urgency for all members of the Labour Party to draw the practical lessons. There is no time to lose in realising working class unity and a basic change in the whole character and fight of the Labour Party.

THE political conclusions to be drawn from the municipal elections for the present situation in Britain are inescapable. Under the present conditions, and on the present lines of policy, there is still the most menacing stagnation of the Labour Movement and no sign of prospect of a Labour majority or defeat of the National Government at the coming general election. There is not even yet any prospect of reaching the level of 1929. The first stirrings of new forces at Bourne-mouth have not yet meant any deeper change, because the basic issues of policy are still unsolved. The Labour Party has still to reach the mass of the workers. Only the realisation of working-class unity and of a united militant leadership on a policy of active challenge to the National Government, not merely on foreign policy and a future legislative programme, but on the immediate issues of the workers' struggle, can arouse the mass response which could transform this situation. For this reason the question of unity cannot be treated as shelved till some future date ; the experience of the municipal elections has shown that it is at the heart of any prospect of a Labour victory ; and the proposal for conversations between the Labour Party and the Communist Party to overcome the obstacles to unity requires to be seriously taken up. On the other hand, the limited local gains won in the municipal elections, and the splendid initial response to the Spain Campaign of the Labour Party, help to show the way forward, that on the basis of a united militant policy a transformation could still be rapidly realised which could bring within view the defeat of the National Government and the realisation of a majority in the coming general election. The alternatives involved are so heavy for the whole future that these issues and lessons of the present situation in Britain require the most serious discussion throughout the Labour Party.

R. P. D.

AGREE AND DIE : FIGHT AND LIVE

The Choice before the Movement

By JOHN STRACHEY

NO Conference of the Labour Party has ever been more discussed than that of Bournemouth. At length it seems possible to draw certain conclusions from this discussion.

The truth, it is becoming clear, is that two separate, and indeed contradictory, things happened at Bournemouth. On the one hand, the Executive Committee, elected at the previous Conference, carried its existing policy many steps further. And on the other, a new Executive Committee, which many presume will carry out a different policy, was elected.

It is extremely important to evaluate both these events. There has been a certain tendency in the discussion of the Conference to concentrate on one of them to the exclusion of the other. Both, however, are of the highest importance. Let us consider them in turn.

The policy which the old Executive carried many stages further at the Bournemouth Conference can, I think, be best described in a single sentence, as a policy of accommodation on all essential issues to the will of the National Government. It would take us too far afield to trace the origins of this policy. Briefly, this policy was laid down in the year 1933 in a series of important speeches, documents and decisions, presented to the Trades Union Congress and Labour Party Conference of that year. An essential part of it has always been the refusal to accept the affiliation of the Communist Party, or to allow of the unification of the movement in any other way. In 1936 the policy of accommodation was chiefly expressed by the movement's declared support, during the first critical month of the Spanish civil war, of the National Government's policy of so-called non-intervention. This year the policy of accommodation was chiefly expressed by the reiterated refusal of unity and, second, and above all, by the support, for the first time frankly and fully expressed, of the National Government's rearmament programme.

The second and contradictory event consisted in the election of the main leaders of the Unity Campaign to the new Executive combined with

the acceptance of the new method of the election of a section of the Executive by the vote of the local Labour Parties alone.

The question on which the whole future of the British Labour Movement depends is simply this : which of these contradictory tendencies which appeared at the Bournemouth Conference, is going to predominate. The reform of the method of election and its immediate fruits in the appearance of new members on the Executive has undoubtedly proved an immense stimulus to the spirits of the movement. Indeed the stimulus had proved so great that there has been a certain tendency to assume that the battle has already been won ; that the policy of accommodation, which was carried to its furthest point at the Bournemouth Conference itself, is now a thing of the past.

It is, however, obviously impossible to take this view. What has happened is that those within the Labour Party who have opposed, and who will certainly continue to oppose, the line of accommodation to the National Government on essentials, have greatly increased their strength. But the struggle itself, by which the policy of accommodation can be changed, still lies ahead of them—and of us.

What will be the test by which in the coming year we shall know whether the British Labour Movement has abandoned the policy of accommodation on essentials? The test is a very simple one. We shall know this by whether the movement opposes the will of the National Government on essential issues, and whether it does so half-heartedly or whole-heartedly.

The coming year will see great and simple issues raised in both home and foreign affairs ; issues upon which the Labour Movement will have to make up its mind whether it is to accommodate itself to, or oppose, the National Government. These will be momentous issues ; they will be issues on which the National Government will be determined to have its way ; issues on which the National Government will, if it meets whole-hearted opposition from the Labour Movement, enter upon a stern struggle with that movement.

We delude ourselves if we think that there are not still very powerful forces within the leadership of the movement which will wish at all costs to accommodate the movement to the National Government's wishes on these essential issues, in order to avoid the grave struggle which will undoubtedly develop if the movement decides to oppose with any vigour. On the other hand, the issues themselves will be of so simple, indeed of so elemental, a character that those forces which wish to oppose the National Government will be in an exceedingly strong position ; for accommodation would mean a startling surrender of much that the British Labour Movement has always stood for.

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Let us see what these issues are likely to be. In the first place, there is the great issue at home : the issue of the defence of the standard of life of the British people. At the moment that issue is forcing itself more and more rapidly upon the movement in the form of the workers', and above all the unemployed workers', reaction to rapidly rising prices. This is the most elemental of all political issues. A Labour Movement which will not fight both industrially and politically on this issue will fight on nothing.

Moreover, this issue of the defence of the national standard of life is likely to arise in a changed and still more acute form during the course of the next twelve months. The slump, that is to say, will come ; indeed it may well already have begun. This is, of course, a mere personal guess ; which is no better and no worse than anyone else's. But even if the slump has not yet begun, then there is a high probability of its beginning within the next twelve months. We should not suppose that we shall necessarily be faced by a catastrophic collapse comparable to that of 1929. It is possible, in view of certain counteracting factors, such as the rearmament programme, that there will be instead a slower, longer dragging depression.

In either case, however, a downward turn of trade (and the possibility is not excluded that it will take a catastrophic form) will end the rise of prices. But it will only do so at the cost of enormously increasing unemployment. (This increase appears to have begun.) The workers' standard of life will be cut into, not indeed as at present by rising prices, but far more sharply by a decreasing number of wage-earners per family. Nor, of course, will the depression have gone far before demands for reductions in wage rates will be made.

The question before the Labour Movement will be this. Shall the leaders of both the industrial and political sides of the movement co-operate with the National Government in attempting to meet the depression by means of measures which must, in the very nature of things, be based on sacrifices from the working class, however disguised these sacrifices may be ? Or shall they genuinely oppose the National Government and defend the national standard of life ? And if the movement chooses this latter course of opposition, how shall this opposition be carried out ? Shall it be confined to a polite, formal and parliamentary opposition, or shall it be a real and formidable opposition ? Shall it be conducted for instance by means of stubborn Trade Union resistance to wage cuts ? Shall the resistance of the unemployed be mobilised, not as was done, (and even in those conditions with considerable success), with the aid of the small resources of the left, in 1933, 1934 and 1935, but with the great resources of the movement as a whole ? Shall the defence of the national standard of life be made, as it obviously can be made, an overwhelming political issue at every election ?

If the movement takes this latter course ; if it begins to oppose with its full strength the declared will of the National Government on essential issues, very serious struggles will result ; but the movement will live again. Moreover, the prospects of success in those struggles, however severe, are exceedingly bright. The truth is that the National Government is bound, whether by means of rising prices in a continuing boom, or by rising unemployment and falling wages in a new slump, to attempt grossly to lower the national standard of life in the next two years. A Labour Movement which has not surrendered its independence can hardly fail to win in such a situation.

The issue of accommodation or struggle is the same, and is even more urgent, in foreign affairs. Unfortunately, in this case it is not quite so simple. I have no doubt that when the majority of its leaders persuaded the Labour Party, as they did, to some extent at Edinburgh and full at Bournemouth, to endorse the rearmament programme, they did so because they assumed that British armaments would always be used to restrain the Fascist aggressor. They could not even comprehend the Communist criticism that, on the contrary, British armaments would be used to strengthen and buttress the position of the Fascist aggressors.

It was by no means difficult to have illusions a year ago. I admit fully to having had some myself. But I suggest that such illusions are now quite impossible. Who can now doubt that the Labour Party's full endorsement of the National Government's rearmament programme at Bournemouth has been used by the National Government as a demonstration of national unity on a policy which is becoming one of full co-operation with the Fascist powers ? The *de facto* recognition of Franco, Mr. Chamberlain's reiterated approaches to Germany and Italy, the National Government's evident desire to serve the interests of Japan in the Far East—are startling and terrible evidence. What we have endorsed is the strengthening of the power of a government which has every intention of turning the existing Berlin, Rome, Tokyo triangle into a Berlin, Rome, Tokyo, London quadrilateral. Surely this fact is now beyond argument.

The practical question is now this. How can Labour now effectively oppose the pro-Fascist world policy of the National Government ? A genuine beginning has been made. The appointment by the new Executive of the Spanish Committee to carry on a large-scale campaign in favour of arms for Spain is a real advance. If this had been done a year ago it would have had a decisive effect on the history of the world. But it is a hundred times better that it should be done now than not at all.

But let us not delude ourselves. There is one thing, and one alone, however hard it may be to do it, which would be taken by the world as a signal that the British Labour Movement had come out in genuine opposition to the pro-Fascist world policy of the National Government. And

that thing is a formal pronouncement on behalf of the movement that, in view of the startling developments in the National Government's foreign policy since the Bournemouth Conference, the Labour Party, both within and without the House of Commons, must reconsider its support of the Government's rearmament policy ; that henceforth it will oppose that policy until, by deeds as well as words, the Government shows that it has abandoned connivance and co-operation with the Fascist aggressors and is implementing a peace policy of solidarity with the democracies.

The uproar which such an announcement would make would, of course, be colossal. The heavens would ring with cries that the British Labour Movement had committed suicide ; that it was asking a disarmed Britain to fight the world, etc., etc. But through all the sound and fury the facts would steadily emerge. The very uproar itself would, for the first time, enlighten the British people to the essential issue. That issue is this. Shall the might of Britain be thrown on the Fascist or the anti-Fascist side ?

I have not the slightest doubt that the Labour Movement, using the great means of publicity which it now has at its command, could, within the space of a few weeks, makes its position clear to the British people ; show that it was opposing rearmament simply because it was now clear that the influence of British arms was being used to make Fascist aggression everywhere possible ; that, as soon as a reversal of the world policy of the National Government had taken place ; as soon as, for example, the British Government has restored the Spanish Government's right to buy arms and had begun to co-operate with, instead of to rebuff the United States in the Far East, the movement's policy towards rearmament would again be reconsidered.

In sum, the question is : will the British Labour Movement, over the coming months, oppose the National Government on essentials, or will it continue and intensify the policy of accommodation which it has pursued over the past four years ? If it does the former, it will live. If it does the latter, it will die. The Bournemouth Conference in itself carried on, and carried further, the policy of accommodation. But, at the same time, it put into the leadership of the movement new forces which are opposed to that policy, and which have already made their influence felt to some extent. What they are able to accomplish depends, of course, not merely on them, but on us. Every single member of the British Labour Movement who realises the position must work as he or she has never worked before to see to it that our movement, instead of agreeing and dying, as it was doing before the Bournemouth Conference, shall now fight and live.

THE END OF THE UP-SWING ?

By JOHN KNIGHT

EMPLOYERS and bankers throughout the world are disturbed about the general business situation. The financial reviews are filled with the speculations of accredited economists concerning the future. "The end of prosperity?" is a headline to be found everywhere in current economic literature. Even members of the governments of many countries have joined the circle of prophets. Not all of them are so complacent as Mr. Chamberlain who, in a speech on November 12 in Edinburgh, said: "I can see no sign of a setback in the immediate future, or, indeed, for some considerable time to come." And one of the reasons for the Prime Minister's optimism: "As to the more serious suggestion that the rearmament programme is not a permanent one and that, when it comes to an end, we are then bound to expect a serious reaction like we had in 1931 and 1932, let me say that the end of the rearmament programme is not in sight yet."

But if anybody should still be doubtful—even after this most important admission that there is no end in sight for rearmament, that armament expenditures would be high even after the completion of the "five-year programme" providing for an expenditure of £1,500 millions*—then he deserves to be bullied just as Mr. Hoover once tried to bully the people of the United States into believing that prosperity was just around the corner:

Therefore I draw the conclusion that there is no ground for pessimism about the future to-day. And if there is no ground for it, if pessimism is not justifiable, then in my opinion it is criminal to talk pessimism, because that is the one thing which would undermine confidence. Prosperity must always be founded upon confidence.

Professor Bertil Ohlin, one of the foremost Swedish economists, is "criminal" enough to begin a survey of world conditions for the Index, the monthly publication of the Svenska Handelsbanken:

After four or five years of unbroken recovery in most countries, world business conditions are to-day much less stable than they have been for a long time. The crisis on the leading stock exchanges and commodity exchanges indicates a nervousness and a feeling of insecurity which cannot be wholly due to the crisis in international politics.

*As forecast in THE LABOUR MONTHLY, June, 1937, by John Knight, "The Financial Consequences of Rearmament," p. 358.

Every intelligent economist or observer of general trade conditions will agree with this statement. He will agree also when Professor Ohlin says : " In many countries some recession of business during the winter of 1937-38 will be difficult to avoid. The point is whether it will degenerate into a major depression or not."

Let us look at world business conditions. About the *United States* Professor Ohlin says :

A decline in the price of industrial shares by 30—40 per cent. (at present shares have declined by 50 per cent. and even more, J.K.) and a corresponding fall in the price of many leading commodities is evidence of a radical disturbance of the economic life of the United States. The very considerable movement of recovery that has taken place in the last two years has evidently been interrupted. Figures for the manufacturing industries, building activity, and trade corroborate this view. Some recession in many industries in the course of next winter seems inevitable.

We quote reports about other countries from the *Monthly Review* of Lloyds Bank :

Great Britain : So far as current trade is concerned the position is thoroughly satisfactory. On the other hand there are here and there signs of a falling-off in new orders. If this is only a temporary pause it will be harmless, for most manufacturers now have good order-books, but should it continue it will be another matter.

Australia : Trade and industry continue to expand, but the general high level of prosperity is not conducive to further rapid progress.

Canada : Economic indices are well maintained and business activity is about 10 per cent. above a year ago, but there are indications of a levelling off after five years of recovery. In some directions there are signs of a recession.

In *France* economic conditions are by no means satisfactory. The financial situation is rotten, and many industries still produce on a level only a little higher than during the depth of the depression. As long as the opposition and passive resistance of the big capitalists to the Popular Front Government is not crushed, there can be no prospect of an improvement.

In *Germany*, where everything is concentrated on the production of more and better armaments, even iron and steel production has stopped increasing and many consumption industries are in a sorry plight.

Wherever we look—intelligent economists, intelligent business men, intelligent Government officials see a crisis approaching. The only question for them is : will it be a major crisis, or only a setback to be followed shortly by a new increase in business activity ?

It is obvious that finance capital will do much to avoid a recurrence of the crisis of 1930 to 1932. They know that the last crisis is still too fresh in the memory of the workers, the black-coated unemployed, the petty

bourgeoisie, to allow of its repetition without the most serious political consequences. Now we know that it is impossible for finance capital to smooth out the contradictions of the capitalist system and to avoid a major cyclical crisis. But this is not all we know. We know two more important facts : first, that an economic crisis can be postponed (as it was postponed in 1914) if finance capital decides upon war ; secondly, that it is often in the hands of finance capital to change the character of the crisis so that it does not too much resemble the previous one, and therefore is neither recognised so quickly as such, nor are the masses of the people prepared so quickly with counter-measures just because they are not aware of the true character of the crisis.

The possibility of war as a means of postponing the next crisis is realised by all of us. But many have in mind another "world war" as in 1914. They do not realise that the fascist countries not only have already decided upon war both as a means of enlarging their field of exploitation and of postponing the next crisis, but that war as a means of postponing the depression has broken out already. For one of the chief reasons for attacking China just now, was the rapid development of an economic crisis in Japan. The Government always warns us of the danger of a general war, always excuses its support for fascist aggressors by saying if we act differently then a new world war would break out. And while the Government says that it prevents a general world war, wars all over the world are being started by the fascists. Instead of a gigantic world war we have a series of wars on a smaller scale, war in Asia (Japan against China), war in Africa (Italy against Abyssinia), war in Europe (Spanish Fascists, supported by Germany and Italy, against the Spanish people).

Our task to-day (to-morrow it may be different) is not to hinder the outbreak of a general war, but to stop the whole series of wars which already have started ; and we must hinder the outbreak of new wars by supporting the anti-fascist peace-pursuing countries. Of course, we must keep in mind the possibility of a general war, but we must not let government propaganda blind us to the fact that the general war may be replaced by a number of wars on a smaller scale, and even more important to the fact that this series of wars has begun already. We are already in the midst of a period of wars. We not only have to fight against the *possibility* of a general war, we have, and that is at present much more important, to fight against the *fact* of a number of wars being fought at this moment. And with the approach of a general crisis more and more countries will incline to start war, or to become somehow involved in wars, in order to postpone this very crisis. *Rarely was there a time in the history of mankind when the relation between economic crisis and war was as close as it is to-day. Every day brings us nearer to an economic breakdown and to new wars.*

Saving one's strength for the great day when a world war is imminent in order to fight for peace would then be childish. The world war may come, but the series of wars has come already. We must fight for world peace and against world war in the future by fighting for peace in the interests of China, of Abyssinia, of the Spanish people to-day. And by doing this we shall not only prepare ourselves for a possible fight against a world war, we shall, and that is at present more important, preserve peace in many parts of the world where the approaching economic crisis makes war appear to the ruling class as "the way out of the dangers of a crisis."

Never in our life-time was the fight against war and against the next crisis so closely related as to-day, and only by realising that can we stop a combination of mass slaughter and mass misery such as mankind has never yet experienced. To under-estimate the importance of the series of wars which began two years ago with the invasion of Abyssinia because one's eyes are fixed upon the possibility of an impending world war means a hasty and wrong reading of the signs of the times.

Fighting with all our might against war means that we must prepare to meet a crisis such as occurred in 1929 to 1932. But it is by no means certain that the ruling class which cannot stop the crisis (except postponing it by war) will not change the form of the crisis. Indeed, if we survey world economic conditions to-day, we not only can envisage the possible character of the next crisis, but we shall find that the crisis has already begun.

The chief characteristic, common to all big industrial countries to-day, is credit inflation and an unbalanced budget. Neither Great Britain, France, Germany, nor the United States has a balanced budget; they all spend more than they take in. In order to make up for this deficiency they issue loans, and in order to issue loans, in order that is to be able to borrow they prepare the loan market by a general increase of credit facilities.

If this policy is continued—and the increasing rearmament expenditures in all these countries make its continuance very likely—a general inflation is highly probable. Inflation means increasing prices and rapidly declining real wages. If real wages decline rapidly it may even be that unemployment will not necessarily increase as much as during the last crisis. In Germany and Austria during the height of the inflation, in 1923, unemployment was comparatively low. Real wages had declined so much that it was profitable for many employers to stop the machines and have the work done by hand. This entailed the hiring of a large number of workers who got just enough wages to keep them alive. In this way almost all workers were kept employed—but they had to live on the standard of the Lumpenproletariat. They were clothed in rags,

they lived on scraps of bread, beets, nettles, etc., and all their savings were lost.

Something like that has already begun to take place in the great industrial countries. The English worker who in 1933 had 50 pounds saved has lost since then about 7 pounds solely through the increase of prices. The American worker has lost more than 10 pounds. And similar conditions prevail in all other countries.

Instead of having deflation—lower prices, an even larger decrease of wages, less government expenditures, etc.—we have entered a period of rapidly increasing prices, rapidly increasing government expenditures, etc., in other words, a period of inflation.* The governments are preparing a gigantic exploitation of the whole working class, and of the petty bourgeoisie, the black-coated workers, war-pensioners, and the like.

It is quite possible that what we are experiencing to-day is only the small beginnings of what will mature during the next few years. It is very feasible that the Government of this as well as of other countries will continue this policy right through the crisis. It is quite on the cards that the Government will try to keep up employment by an enormous increase in armament orders, by gigantic public works (road building, amelioration work on the big estates, etc.)—paying for it in pounds which have less and less purchasing power.

On a small scale all this is already happening. On a small scale the crisis has already begun. *It is not a question when the next crisis will occur. A careful observer will find that the crisis has already begun. Real wages in 1937 have already begun to decline. The wage increases during 1937 have been smaller than the price increases. Inflation has already set in in most industrial countries, and in few more so than in this country.*

What must we do in order to fight against this gigantic exploitation now under way? We must counter every price increase by wage demands, wage demands providing an increase greater than that of the cost of living. We must demand that increased Government expenditure shall not be met by increased borrowing, but by increased taxes on the rich. We must demand that road building schemes, etc., shall be paid for from tax receipts—taxes on the rich and not taxes on the masses of the people. We must demand that the savings of the masses shall be protected from devaluation. We must demand that all savings up to 500 pounds be coupled with the cost of living index: if 500 pounds are to-day on the savings account and the cost of living increases by 10 per cent., then the small investor should get 550 pounds when he withdraws his savings.

But, of course, we must also be prepared for a change in the tactics of the employers and bankers. They may return to a policy of deflation—

*This is not contradicted by the temporary deflation in share and some raw material prices in recent months.

as they did recently for a few months in the United States—and then the “well known crisis in the 1929-32 manner” will repeat itself. Or they may try to change the character of the crisis from time to time, start with an inflation crisis, as they have done during the past year, then begin to deflate, then again inflate, etc. The decisive thing is to be prepared for all the possible tactics that finance capital may employ, especially for its two chief moves, the inflation and the deflation crisis.

The new world war in the form of a series of wars has already begun. The new crisis in the form of an inflation crisis has also already begun. The time for preparations has passed. The time for action has come: action for peace, action against the aggressors, action for keeping up the standards of living, action against mass exploitation during the crisis. The most decisive period in our life-time has arrived, it is not approaching, for it is here. Everybody must decide whether he is for war, for mass misery, for all that the word barbarism stands for; or whether he is for peace, for general well-being, for everything the word culture stands for. There is and can be no neutrality, no backing out of decisions for or against these issues. And peace, welfare, culture, must and will win.

THE NEW “ HOLY ALLIANCE ”

By RICHARD GOODMAN

ITALY'S participation in last year's German-Japanese pact against "Communism and the Communist International," was sealed in Rome on November 6. On that day Count Ciano, the Italian Foreign Minister, Herr von Ribbentrop, who numbers among his several offices the post of Ambassador to London, and the Japanese Ambassador in Rome, Hotta, signed a protocol by which

Italy accedes to the agreement against the Communist International and the supplementary protocol concluded in Berlin on November 25, last year ;

the three signatory Powers agree that Italy shall be considered as an original signatory of the November 25 agreement and its supplementary protocol ; and

the protocol itself becomes an integral part of the original agreement and supplementary protocol.

The original German-Japanese agreement, it will be remembered, stated that—

“ in consideration of the fact that the Communist International continues constantly to endanger the civilised world in the East and West, disturbing and destroying peace and order, the following clauses have been agreed upon :

“(1) The high contracting parties agree mutually to inform each other of the activities of the Communist International, consult with each other concerning the necessary measures of defence and to carry out such measures in close co-operation with each other.

“(2) The high contracting parties will issue a joint invitation to any State, the domestic peace of which is threatened by the disruptive activities of the Communist International, to take all measures of defence in conformity with the spirit of the present agreement or else to adhere to the agreement itself.”

The supplementary protocol provides that

The high contracting parties will take severe measures against those who, at home or abroad, are directly or indirectly engaged in the service of the Communist International or promote its subversive activities.

Although statements by the signatories emphasising that the protocol is "not directed against any nation" were made part of the signing ceremony and although it was denied that the pact contains military or naval secret clauses, articles in the fascist press commenting on the conclusion of the pact gave an entirely different impression.

Mussolini's mouthpiece, Gayda, writing in *La Voce d'Italia*, declared :

Though it is not designed to threaten, the tripartite agreement repels all threats and dull resistance, and it is certain that, besides the Communist problem, **Italy, Germany and Japan will find in their solidarity other vast objects for collaboration. . . . The three signatories of to-day's pact can defend themselves with nearly 2,000,000 tons of warships, which are being constantly and rapidly increased.**

At the same time the whole Italian press, emphasising the fact that the Japanese navy is the third largest in the world, printed pictures of Japanese warships and gave prominence to the presence of four German warships at Gaeta.

The *Corriere della Sera* wrote :

The aim of the tripartite anti-Communist agreement is, as has been clearly said, deliberately pacific. Italy, Germany and Japan are undertaking a work which will be constructive not destructive. But the close and active friendship of the three States, which together contain a population of more than 200,000,000, is a positive element which is bound to dominate international affairs in a particular sense. Whether it is to be a beneficent event will depend on the wisdom of others which up to date has appeared inadequate, but which may recover itself easily in face of eloquent facts.

The Japanese press comment was no less significant. The *Asahi* observed that Great Britain and France, as well as the Soviet Union, would not be able to look on the pact with indifferent eyes. The *Nichi-Nichi* connected the pact with general policies and declared that Japan, Germany and Italy are endeavouring to change the world *status quo* and establish "genuine international justice."

Hitler, speaking at Munich on November 9, said : "Three States have come together. First a European axis and now a great world political triangle. . . . It does not consist of three feeble images, but of *three States that are ready and determined to realise their rights and their vital interests.*"

The *Times* Berlin correspondent reporting this speech commented that it "confirmed the opinion held by political observers here that the Anti-Comintern Pact is *an alliance for the furtherance of aims which have little to do with the campaign against Bolshevism.*"

The *Manchester Guardian* Rome correspondent wrote on November 9 : "The pressure on Italy in the Mediterranean is considered to have been

relieved by the emergence of the Japanese navy on the exposed flank of the British Empire."

The Rome correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* and *Morning Post* reported that that pact was "interpreted by many observers as giving the high contracting parties a pretext for interfering in the domestic affairs of foreign states. It is also interpreted as giving Japan a retrospective permit from both Germany and Italy to interfere in the domestic affairs of China under the pretext that China is riddled by Bolshevism."

Perhaps, however, the two most revealing declarations made by the fascist press were those of the *Gazeta del Popolo* and the *Turin Stampa*. The former said :

The latest Communist experiments are those of Spain and France. In Spain we had to intervene somewhat energetically in order to arrest this development. In France we witnessed with regret the work of internal disruption which Communism is about to accomplish with the unsuspecting approval of democracy and the inability of the nationalist parties to react against it.

Communism thus finds itself faced with unprecedented coalition of forces extending from the West to the Far East, unparalleled in power and especially in capacity for immediate and resolute action. The armies of Japan, of Italy and of Germany are the strongest, the best armed and the most prepared.

Stampa, seizing on the first excuse it could lay on, wrote :

It is not surprising that the pact tastes bitter in British mouths, and that the French are indulging in the most extravagant conjectures. But we should never have thought that President Benes, of Czechoslovakia, would have got to the point of sending a telegram of congratulation to the masters of the Kremlin on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the foundation of the Soviet Republic. *The rulers of Prague must not be scandalised if they are classed as the Bolshevik stronghold in the heart of Europe.*

Thus there is conclusive evidence, from the columns of the fascist press itself, that the scope of the so-called "Anti-Comintern" pact is far wider than one of "struggle against Communism."

What then are the real aims of this so-called "Anti-Communist" alliance? We must realise in the first place, I believe, that to some extent—though, of course, by no means wholly, the pact is an open admission of what is already the case. In one form or another all the three signatory Powers, the three leading fascist Powers of the world, are at this very moment waging a war ostensibly against "Communism" in different parts of the globe. Italy has intervened in Spain and is now fighting there for three reasons: Firstly, she realised that a strong democratic, Republican Spain would be a tremendous inspiration to the underground, but gathering forces of democracy in Italy itself; that the route of fascism in Spain would bring all the nearer the day when fascism

would be decisively challenged in the land of its birth ; secondly, Italian fascism saw a unique opportunity to make her own the rich mineral resources of the Peninsula ; and thirdly, she realised that an Italian controlled Spain would be a strategic-military gain of the first importance and would place her in a position completely to dominate the Mediterranean and the " life-line " of her rival, British Imperialism, with whom, sooner or later, she is determined to settle accounts.

There was, and Mussolini knew it as well as anybody, no question of the establishment in Spain of a Soviet Republic. But that was immaterial. By rousing the " bogey of Communism " he could confuse his capitalist rivals, and confuse too a considerable section of less progressive Liberal opinion which would have condemned his aggression if they had not been blinded on real issues by the " Anti-Communist " smoke screen raised by the fascists. [There can be no doubt that greater masses of people in this country were, in theory at least, on the side of Abyssinia where the " Communist " bogey could not be raised—the " slavery " bogey is not nearly so effective—than there are supporting the cause of the Spanish Government to-day, when that bogey has been used to the full.] Japan launched her war against the Chinese people on the grounds that the Nanking Government was " tainted with Communism," and that the Communists were responsible for the anti-Japanese movement in China. Such an excuse would be laughable in any less serious situation. For ten years—while, incidentally, Japan ceaselessly strengthened her position on the mainland by stealth, by drugs, by provocation, by bribery, by blackmail and threats, and by open aggression—Chiang Kai-shek and his Government waged a ceaseless war against the Chinese Soviets, their Red Army and the Chinese Communists, and were well on their way to establishing a fascist dictatorship. Perhaps no government in the world could be said to be less " tainted with Communism " than that of Nanking. But Japanese imperialism needed the rich lands not only of what is now Manchukuo, but of the entire five northern provinces of China—and more if she could get it. It needed a place d'armes from which to launch its attack against the Mongolian People's Republic and the Soviet Union. And it needed to strengthen its position on the mainland in preparation for intensified struggle with its imperialist rivals, especially Britain and the U.S.A. " Communism " provided the excuse once again.

German fascism, determined to obtain new sources of raw materials, new military-strategic positions in preparation for her fascist revisionist war drive in Europe and having successfully used the " Communist bogey " to overthrow the Weimar Republic and obtain power, is intervening in Spain with the excuse that it will " never tolerate a Bolshevik state in Western Europe " ; German fascism is preparing to intervene in Czechoslovakia on the ground that that very bourgeois republic is " a breeding

ground of Bolshevism," but really to bring Czechoslovakia under the hegemony of the Third Reich and to break the Czechoslovak-Soviet pact, one of the mainstays of European peace, barring the way to the further advance of fascism; German fascism is preparing the way for an attempt to annexe the rich Soviet Ukraine on the pretext of "Bolshevik misrule." Thus we see that the so-called "Anti-Communist" pact is in fact an open admission of what already are the methods employed by the fascist Powers in their revisionist drive to repartition the world. In the second place, this new alliance has for one of its aims the winning of the smaller countries into the fascist camp and, bound up with this, the formation of what has been described as a "counter-League-of-Nations," a League for aggression to be swung into action when the time comes against the great democracies of the world—Britain, France, Soviet Union and the United States of America.

"The establishment of this bloc of three aggressors," *Pravda* wrote, "is witness of the fact that the fascist Powers intend, for the realisation of their plans, to co-ordinate their activities for the purpose simultaneously of stirring up all the hot-beds of war." There can be no doubt that Germany and Italy would be considerably strengthened if there existed a solid bloc of larger and smaller fascist states across the centre of Europe, dividing France and Britain from the Soviet Union. That this is one of the objects behind the conclusion of the alliance is obvious.

Immediately after the conclusion of the pact the German Ambassador Ribbentrop called on Mussolini and was with him and Count Ciano for over two hours. The *News-Chronicle* Rome correspondent wrote: "At this meeting serious heart-to-heart talks took place. The Far Eastern situation, the colonial drive, Austria and Spain and Czechoslovakia are believed to have been reviewed."

The *Manchester Guardian's* Berlin correspondent reported that: "The extension of the anti-Bolshevik front is already providing food for Gargantuan appetites. *Already a vast potential block of "Anti-Comintern" States is seen which would put Russia and France into the background.* . . . If England persists in continuing to believe that her interests lie outside, the anti-Comintern group would give her much to think about.

Most significant of all, perhaps, was a despatch from the *Times* Berlin correspondent, which revealed clearly enough the fascist designs:

It is assumed that the attempt to recruit further signatories will be energetically pursued and it would cause no surprise here if the accession of Italy were to be followed by a joint German-Italian invitation to Czechoslovakia which in the German view is not only a breeding ground of Bolshevism, but persecutes the German population under cover of an alliance with Russia. In that connexion it is remarked that the announcement of the minorities' agreement between Germany and Poland and the signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact within twenty-four hours,

of each other may not have been altogether fortuitous. This may be regarded as isolating Czechoslovakia on the question of Bolshevism and minorities, and the isolation may be expected to become more pronounced as other countries join.

The winning—or rather blackmailing—of smaller countries to join the fascist alliance has a dual importance for the fascist Powers. It would inevitably lead to the crushing of every remaining democratic liberty in those countries (and fascism must crush not only democracy at home, but democracy abroad as well), while the adherence of each small country to the bloc would mean one more important military-strategic advance and, at the same time, simultaneously a further weakening of the League of Nations. (It should be noted in passing that the use of the “anti-Communist” excuse for intervening in another country has, as a result of the tolerant attitude of the bourgeois democratic Powers, already struck a severe blow against the League: the precedent has been created—in Spain and in China—that when a fascist Power intervenes in another country on the ground that it is doing so to combat the “Bolshevik menace,” then it is not guilty of aggression).

Finally, and above everything else, this new “Holy Alliance” is directed against France and Britain. It was no accident that it followed closely on reports from Berlin that Germany is to make a demand for the return of her pre-war colonies. It is no accident that it followed closely on reports from Rome—taken seriously in Government circles here—that Italy will, sooner or later, denounce the Palestine mandate. It is no accident that recently Italy has been pouring troops into Libya. Italy is no longer content with intervention against the Spanish people, *Pravda* wrote. “Italy is seeking allies for the future repartition of the possessions of England. . . . Germany in her turn reckons on utilising the situation that is developing in the Pacific Ocean as well as in the Mediterranean so as to obtain the repartition of the colonial possessions of England and France.” The British press recognised this clearly enough. Even the Conservative *Daily Telegraph* and *Morning Post* stated:

It would be easier to believe it that this act is a “guarantee of world peace,” as Ribbentrop declared if Bolshevism to-day were the only formidable enemy to world peace; but recent events have strongly suggested that peace at present has most to fear from the embattled and allied enemies of Bolshevism. This “definite barrier” against Communism would perhaps be more serviceable to the cause of peace if it confined those who have so ostentatiously erected it. . . . Both France and Great Britain—and the United States as well—might be excused for finding not much reassurance in a barrier against Bolshevism which extends from the Baltic and the North Sea, through the Mediterranean to the Pacific—just where, in fact, some of their vital interests might be affected. . . . France and Great Britain might be excused for believing that their concern in this anti-Bolshevik pact was more direct

than that of Soviet Russia, which has the advantage of being almost invulnerable.

Nevertheless, it would be a serious mistake to imagine that the pact is directed solely against Britain, France and, to a less extent, against the U.S.A., and not at all against the U.S.S.R. The fascist Powers hate the rich Soviet land. They dream of dismembering it. But they hate it, too, because it is the most stalwart defender of democracy and of peace. Therefore they seek to destroy it. The *Diplomatische Korrespondenz* admitted this open when it said: "In the long run it will not be possible deliberately to overlook the close relationships, underlined by the Government of the Soviet Union itself, between the political and philosophical exponents of Moscow."

But, unlike the Soviet Union, France and Britain, although they realise the threat of the fascist Powers, do less than nothing to check it. Immediately after the conclusion of this pact the National Government—which, because of its tolerance of fascist aggression, its betrayal of the League of Nations, its encouragement of German rearmament, and indeed its whole foreign policy, bears the main responsibility for the existence of the pact at all—sends its envoy, in the person of Lord Halifax, not to warn Hitler that any aggression will be met by the joint stand of all the democratic Powers, but to try to bargain—offering Hitler a free hand in Eastern Europe if he will postpone his colonial demands. If the fascist Powers realise the necessity to co-ordinate their activities to achieve their aggressive ends, surely it is time for the British, French and American democracies to realise that they, together with the Soviet Union, must stand firm by the principles of the League and collective security, and by one another if these aggressive designs are to be checked. For this bloc of aggressors is by no means as strong as it seems. It is as strong as the indecisiveness, shortsightedness and tolerance of the democratic Powers make it. And until that is realised there can be no hope for peace or democracy.

THE LABOUR MOVEMENT AND THE COUNTRYSIDE

By MAURICE CORNFORTH

THE British Labour Movement as a whole, and in particular its Left sections, including the Communist Party, have hitherto paid but scanty attention to the countryside. But we are being brought up against the fact to-day, that the countryside is of decisive importance in the struggle of the labour movement. Unless some agricultural districts are won away from Toryism, it is going to be extremely difficult to shift the National Government. Unless agricultural districts are won eventually for Socialism, great obstacles are going to be placed in the way of building a Socialist Britain.

The history of the British countryside for the last 100 years has been a history of intermittent working-class struggle. What we have in the British countryside is by no means a *peasant* problem, as in most other capitalist countries. As Marx's analysis in *Capital* showed, capitalist farming was one of the earliest developments of capitalism in Britain ; the peasantry were all expropriated years ago.

The bulk of the population engaged in agricultural production to-day consists of landless proletarians—the farm labourers. Their number has been steadily declining, due to emigration to the towns, etc., and the 1937 returns of the Ministry of Agriculture show that there are to-day 631,100 farm workers engaged in agricultural production.

There are in Britain to-day about 4,500 farmers and market gardeners. Roughly two thirds of the total agricultural land is farmed by about one third of the farmers, who employ hired labour. The remaining two thirds of the farmers have to get on with mainly their own and family labour on smaller farms occupying only a third of the total agricultural land.

The main production, therefore, is carried out along capitalist lines by the exploitation of wage-labour for profit.

From the beginning the wages and conditions—both conditions of work and social conditions—of the agricultural workers, have been appallingly bad. And the main struggle of the labour movement in the countryside has been to secure some slight amelioration of the conditions of the workers. The labour movement in the past has not paid much

attention to the problems of the smallholders and small farmers—many of whom are in fact little better off than the workers—nor has it paid much attention to the wider problems of the industry as a whole, and how agricultural production should be reorganised.

The present Unions began in the countryside with Arch's Union in 1872. More than once since then it has died out, only to arise again. Large-scale strikes and lockouts have occurred, extending over many counties, especially in the Eastern Counties' district. In the 90's the National Farmers' Union was started in Norfolk, as a compact between big farmers to help one another against the workers in strikes.

As the result of the Trade Union struggle, trade unionism is established to-day in the main agricultural areas, despite the victimisation which still exists. And the principle of collective bargaining has been established through the County Wages Boards. However, the tied cottage system still exists, social conditions are still miserably bad, long hours are worked, the average wage is still only about 34s., and payment of workers below the legal minimum rate is still very widespread.

No one can doubt that the labour movement in the countryside has the task to-day to carry on the struggle for the organisation of the agricultural workers, and for improved wages, conditions and social life. Just as in the towns, the time is very opportune for such a united struggle. The agricultural workers have always replied to their bad conditions by getting away from the land whenever possible; and the recent flow of labour away from the land into the cities—and also into non-agricultural jobs, such as building and road construction, in the country districts—has resulted in a present shortage of farm labour.

It is a very significant thing that eight farmers, writing in *The Farmer and Stockbreeder* of July 27, should call attention to the shortage of farm labour; and should all agree that this shortage has three causes—low wages, long hours, and bad housing conditions, as a result of which the workers take every chance they can to get away from the land. When even big farmers are forced to talk like this, it is clear that the time is ripe for a united Trade Union advance in the countryside. The country workers are more ready to listen to labour and trade union agitation now, than they have been for many years past.

But while this taking up and continuing the struggle of the agricultural workers must form the essential basis of Labour in the countryside, the labour movement will still not get very far to-day if its activities are confined—as some of the Trade Union leaders would like them to be confined—to the economic struggles of the farm workers alone. It has been the great weakness of the country workers' movement in the past, that it has been a primitive economic movement, without wider social and political consciousness and aims.

To-day three considerations especially present themselves : (1) The agricultural industry as a whole is in a state of crisis and decline ; and unless this decline can be arrested, there is no future for anyone—whether worker or farmer—on the land. (2) Besides the farm workers, there are other strata of rural society who suffer bitter exploitation at the hands of capitalism—smallholders, small poultry farmers, etc. ; small working farmers ; and also thousands of “ middle ” farmers, employing wage-labour, who still cannot get on because of lack of capital resources, because of the burden of rent and interest charges, etc., because of the restrictions which the various Government Boards place upon their production. (3) And thirdly, there is the wider political aspect of the question, the fight to defeat the National Government of the rich and privileged, in order to defend peace and democracy, and—so far as the special questions of the countryside are concerned—to secure legislation in the interests of the agricultural workers and poor farmers and to avert the decline of agriculture.

Therefore the labour movement needs to come forward with a policy which will have a wide appeal to both the agricultural workers and to those thousands of farmers who are themselves suffering exploitation to-day. A policy which will show what can be done to secure a better use of the land, and a better life for all who toil on the land. A policy around which all democratic and progressive country people can be united, and which will unite them with the movement in the cities and industrial areas. A policy which will show the labour movement as the champions of all who toil on the land—and of the land itself, in the proper cultivation of which all country people take the most personal interest.

In order to estimate what is required of such a policy, and what basis exists in the countryside for a broad popular movement against the National Government and the interests it represents, we must examine for a moment the position of agriculture under the National Government.

In 1931, when the National Government took office, agriculture was going through a most acute crisis. Price levels had collapsed, the whole industry was on the verge of bankruptcy. For instance, the survey of farming in the Eastern Counties, undertaken by the Cambridge University Department of Agriculture, showed that most of the big East Anglian farms were not only not paying, but were losing heavily. The National Government took measures, through the institution of the various Marketing Boards, to ward off the threatened collapse. This they succeeded in doing, on the one hand by large-scale subsidies, on the other hand by measures of restricting production, controlling marketing operations, and instituting quotas and tariffs, all of which had the effect of raising prices.

There is not space here to describe in any detail the National Government's system of Marketing Boards. But the following main conclusions from their policy can be drawn :—

(1) While the Government policy *did* for the moment succeed in staving off complete *ruin*—and therefore won the support of the majority of farmers, small and large—it has not stopped the decline of agriculture, and so in the long run has proved an abject failure. Every year under the National Government (with the exception of 1935) more and more agricultural land has gone out of cultivation, and fewer and fewer farm workers are employed. This year, for instance, a decrease of 102,000 acres, and of 9,500 workers.

(2) The Government policy of restricting production, imposing tariffs on imported foodstuffs, and so raising prices, not only penalises the working-class consumers of agricultural goods, but it denies to the agricultural industry any prospect for a real basis of recovery. For this policy, while it pretends to open up the home market for British agricultural producers by taxing and keeping out foreign goods, in reality restricts that home market, on which the prosperity of agriculture in the last resort depends. Consequently the Government keeps the industry going by means of uneconomic subsidies, but denies to the industry any possibility of an expanding market.

(3) Thirdly, and this is the root of the whole matter, the National Government is not concerned at all with the welfare of the land and of those who work upon it, but rather with safeguarding the interests of a rich minority—exploiters of the land and of the land-workers.

So far as the farmers are concerned, it is the big farmers, the rich, who have received the plums from the National Government's policy. To take the Wheat Subsidy alone. It is estimated in *Britain Without Capitalists* that a third of this subsidy has gone to 11,870 big farmers, farming over 300 acres. Another third has gone to 31,770 farmers with farms of 150 to 300 acres. And the remaining third has been divided amongst 172,000 small farmers. Again, the Cambridge University Survey estimated that, between 1931 and 1933 in the Eastern Counties, the incomes of smallholders remained as they were ; the incomes of farmers from 50 to 150 acres were doubled ; of farmers from 150 to 300 acres, trebled ; and of farmers from 300 to 500 acres, quadrupled. The Government has therefore well befriended the big farmers, while the smallholder and small farmer has had to struggle on almost unaided.

Further, the National Government has been particularly solicitous for the profits of the thousands of middlemen, who take their toll out of all agricultural marketing and who disorganise the whole marketing process. Under the National Government the big distribution combines, *e.g.*, United Dairies, have made record profits. Manufacturing interests have made millions out of the subsidies—such interests as Tate and Lyle

in the Sugar Beet Corporation ; and the manufacturers of milk products, to whom the Milk Marketing Board supplies milk at 5½d. a gallon. Those firms which supply raw materials to the farmers are also doing well. The costs of feeding stuffs, etc., which the farmer has to buy, have increased enormously, which represents a very heavy blow against thousands of the poorer farmers, small poultry farmers, etc., and a source of profit to such big interests as Spillers.

Under the National Government the big landowners have also been secure in their rents. And defending the system of private ownership of the land which places all the obstacles of vested interests in the way of any national scheme for land improvement, the National Government has failed to take any effective measures on such questions as land drainage, with the result that the countryside still suffers annual loss through summer droughts and winter floods. The National Government took such action on the Tithe question as to guarantee to the Tithe-owners their tribute of £2,000,000 a year for the next 60 years.

What has been the attitude of the farmers ? The National Farmers' Union, controlled by the big farmers, has in the main supported the National Government. Recently, however, something like a revolt has been taking place in the N.F.U. against the Government, to such an extent that several Branches talk of withdrawing their support from National Government candidates. It is likely that the threats of such rebels are partly bluff. But what the leading sections of the N.F.U. are pressing for is not a new policy opposed to that of the National Government, but for more and bigger tariffs and more and bigger subsidies. They want the Government's anti-working-class policy to be made even *more* anti-working-class.

Nevertheless, the " revolt " in the N.F.U. shows a dissatisfaction with the National Government's policy even in the ranks of the big farmers. The smaller farmers and middle farmers have been in a quandary. Their dissatisfaction with the Marketing Boards is extreme. Twice, for instance, they have made an uproar at the annual meeting of the Milk Marketing Board. They staged what amounted to a spontaneous demonstration against the Pig Board last year, by refusing to fulfil their contracts under the Board. But since they have no alternative to offer to the National Government and its policy, they end by tailing dejectedly behind the reactionaries of the N.F.U. and behind the Government. When there was a ballot, for instance, on whether the Milk Board should continue, they voted for its continuance—not because they liked it, but because they could see no alternative.

The Labour movement has to offer an alternative policy, to which it can win all these smaller farmers, along with the working-class. It must break their alliance with the reactionaries, and win them as allies of the

working-class. There are few grounds of antagonism between these strata of the rural people and the workers. They themselves employ little wage labour ; they also are oppressed by the National Government and its friends ; their daily lives are very like those of the workers themselves. With the bigger farmers the case is different, for generations these people have been the bitterest and meanest exploiters of labour. Their ties are with the big capitalist interests, and not with the workers. Many of them have investments in precisely those concerns against which the poorer farmers have to fight. The fight of the workers for decent conditions is, in daily practice, directed precisely against these big farmers. Even so, it is likely that there are individual big farmers (one or two could be named) who, from studying the present position of agriculture, can be won to an alliance with the labour movement ; whose personal influence can then become a most important factor in the districts in which they live.

In July of this year the Labour Party issued its immediate programme for the countryside. And it can be stated without hesitation that this programme, despite certain omissions, does provide the policy required to unite the country people. The programme consists of eight points, viz. :

1. NATIONAL OWNERSHIP OF LAND with
2. FAIR RENTS AND FINANCIAL HELP.
3. GUARANTEED PRICES FOR PRODUCE through
4. CONTROL OF IMPORTED PRODUCE and
5. BETTER MARKETING OF HOME PRODUCE.
6. A NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE.
7. IMPROVED RURAL HOUSING.
8. BETTER WATER AND LIGHT SUPPLIES.

For the full explanation of the meaning of the points thus briefly set out, the Labour Party pamphlet, " Labour's Policy for Our Countryside," by Lord Addison, should be consulted.

To sum up, the present tasks before the British Labour Movement in the countryside are the following :—

(1) To push forward the building of the working-class organisations, for a united advance to better wages, hours and conditions of work, and for better housing and social conditions.

(2) To popularise the immediate Labour Programme by every possible means.

(3) To win for this policy, in alliance with the workers, the mass of smallholders and small and middle farmers, together with every progressive and democratic person in the countryside.

(4) And thus to secure the defeat in the country districts of the representatives of the National Government, of riches, privilege and reaction, and to contribute to the return of a Government which will defend peace, democracy, and the interests of the people in town and countryside.

WOMEN WORKERS IN A WIRELESS FACTORY

By DOROTHY JACQUES

DARK evenings have set in once again. Home from work, we draw up our chairs round the leaping fire, and turn on the radio. And whether we live in the heart of a great city or in a shepherd's cottage among the bleak hills of the north, we are equally thankful to those whose genius and inventiveness made entertainment "via the ether" possible. Genius alone could not bring a wireless set to nearly every home in Britain. This miracle could only be brought about by the collective work of thousands of working men and women—their labour, adaptability, skill and intelligence was needed to build up the colossal wireless industry we now possess in this country.

Sit up in your chair, and take another look at your wireless set on the table there, and instead of thinking only in terms of Marconi—think of the British workers who made that very set of yours.

During the Autumn and right up till Xmas, there is a regular boom in the wireless industry every year. The demand for new sets, or new parts, is such that many factories work overtime for months on end. This seasonal boom calls for an influx of new workers, and in October and November therefore many factories advertise for women and girls ("experience not necessary") to work in the highly rationalised modern wireless production factories. (Wireless production to-day rests on female labour.)

The notorious ——'s factory in London is no exception to this. Every Autumn there is a shortage of women workers here, production is at top speed and new hands are wanted urgently! They advertise for "Female learners—experience not necessary." Let us go together and apply for work here; let us see for ourselves a wireless set in the making. If you are like me, you must have often opened the back of your wireless and looked in at that amazing contraption of wires and valves—and wondered—and wondered. Well, let us cease wondering. Come, off to the employment bureau at ——'s factory and we will see for ourselves.

We present ourselves at the employment office with about 20 other females of assorted ages from 14 to 50 odd. We are told we will be "taught the trade" for two months at the learners' rate of 6d. an hour

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—plus a bonus of between 4s. and 5s. a week, adds our suave lady interviewer. After our period of learning, we will be put on to the regular women's rate of 6½d. an hour. The bonus and the chance of a regular job would depend on how we shaped.

There is a shortage of labour in two shops—"the set-building" and "the valve making." "Have you girls any preference?" A few of us fancying our scientific turn of mind plump for the valve-making shop, and are told to present ourselves there the next morning. Two or three friends shake hands with us that evening, cheerfully informing us that they never knew anyone who lasted out more than a fortnight in the "valve shop." They tell us a few blood-curdling stories, then shake hands again. Nothing daunted, we arrive at the valve-shop next morning. We enter a huge gloomy, grey building—grey walls, grey floor, grey machines. At long benches sit some hundreds of young girls supervised by stern-faced men. Some are doing very fine work under vivid blue lights; some are working with little machines which flare and splutter the whole time; others are working at machines which go round and round and round. The girls all have a bored, far-away look on their faces, although the factory has only started up this morning some ten minutes ago.

The boss arrives, resplendent in white coat—gives the new girls a glance over, and then sends us off to fill up empty places on the benches, or at the grey machines which revolve relentlessly. We are set on together at a "capping" machine, given a few very brief instructions and told to get on with the job. We sit side by side before a strange machine which seems to consist chiefly of a large revolving wheel—which exudes a great deal of heat incidentally. The charge-hand indicates a pile of trays—each tray contains a great many little glass objects. Ah, the valves! One of us has to place a little black cap on top of each valve and then insert the "capped" valve into spaces in the revolving wheel. The other one has to lift out the valves as they come back to their starting point again after travelling once round the circumference. The caps have been "baked," the substance inside them has melted, and in a few minutes it will set hard; then the cap will be securely fixed to the valve. It is my job to see that each cap is exactly straight on the valve. I have to wear a pair of thick gloves, pick out the hot valves, straighten the cap with my finger, then place the valve in another tray to cool. This sounds easy. But alas! In a short while the chargehand asks me if I can see straight! All the caps I have "straightened" are "clean cock-eyed" he says. Manfully I swallow a lump and offer to do better. To get the sack in the first half-hour would never do. But my confidence is shaken; in the next half-hour I drop and smash to smithereens some three valves, and bring the odium of the chargehand down on my head once more.

Round and round goes the wheel-like machine, round and round. The chargehand observes that we are missing holes in it in order to give ourselves a chance to do the work better. "Fill up every hole," he says, "fill them up!" We look at each other in dumb misery. From then until dinner-time we are engaged in a heroic but vain struggle to "fill up every hole." For my part as this means that each hole revolving round contains a valve—and as each valve has a cap that needs straightening—I have to work quicker and quicker. Yet try as I may, I cannot keep up with the speed of the machine. My capping becomes more "cock-eyed" than ever! When I can keep up with the machine no longer I let two valves go round in the wheel a second time. Alas, the chargehand's eagle eye misses nothing. He informs me that twice baked valves are spoilt valves—only the dinner-bell ringing saves me from dismissal the first morning.

We are both weary with heat and fatigue and can eat little dinner. Then comes the afternoon from 1 p.m. till 6 p.m.—five hours without a single break! Back we go—somewhat fearfully—to the "capping" machine, and round and round it goes. Though the weary minutes of the interminable afternoon seem to go ever more slowly, the machines seem to go faster and faster. Surely Mr. Bedaux himself must have invented this monster. So we keep on—putting valves in—taking them out—valves and more valves. How many have we done since this morning? One thousand five hundred valves. Valves. We can see nothing else but little glass valves; we can think of nothing else but valves. Did you see Charlie Chaplin in his last and great film, "Modern Times"—Charlie on the conveyor belt going mad? Well, that's just how we feel, crazy, silly with fatigue, and yet it's only 4 o'clock. Another two hours to go—time to do another 500 valves! More "cock-eyed" caps, more bullying, more broken valves.

As there is no time allowed during the five-hour stretch for getting a drink or going to the toilet, we arrange with a third girl to take turns in leaving the machine. My effort is almost frustrated, for just as I jump up from my seat the manager, who unknown to us has been standing behind watching our despairing efforts at the machine, taps me on the shoulder and asks where I am going. "For a drink," I say. "Don't you know you can't leave your place," he replies. Then turning to the miserable flunkey at his side—the under-manager—he laughs in a disgusting fashion and says: "Oh, well, I suppose we can scarcely stop them going to the lavatory!"

At long last comes heaven—6 p.m. The switches are turned down. The relentless monsters stop work and we totter out into the cool night air feeling faint and giddy. We resolve, nevertheless, to go back again

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the second day, for we feel there is much to see and understand in this factory.

Did I tell you our machine is called a capping machine. Well, its real name is a "baking" machine. "Sure, it's us that gets baked." If the temperature of the machine wasn't 198°C., the valves cap would not "bake" right. Sitting in front of this machine I feel as if I am being "roasted on the spit!" We complain to our nearby neighbours of the heat, and they say: "That's nothing, plenty are carried out stiff." A fortnight later I am carried out "stiff" myself! And in the weeks that follow both of us are many times almost overcome again by the heat and the fume-laden atmosphere. It is the middle of winter, yet most of us wear thin summer frocks and sweat in them. The other girls tell us that in the summer they often wear just bathing costumes under their overalls, and even so the number of "stiffs" is very high!

Sometimes it seems girls faint through other things than heat. We make the acquaintance of a woman working on a "testing" machine. Her job is to fit the valves into an electric testing board. Occasional faulty valves cause something to fuse, there is a loud explosion and the valve bursts. The girl invariably gets an electric shock and the machine may be slightly damaged. We notice that whenever this happens the manager, under-manager and lesser flunkies all rush up to examine the machine, while no notice is taken of the almost collapsed girl. This happens often, but the rate of pay is the same on this machine as on ours, 6d. an hour for learners, 6½d. for experts.

As the days pass we two become a little more proficient. My capping improves somewhat, we drop less valves, we learn to *almost* keep up with the speed of the machine—we never do quite! In between the bouts of bullying that we receive still regularly, we find time to look around, to observe and notice things. Then, too, we meet other girls in the toilet and talk with them about their job and their wages. Don't imagine, of course, that there are any arm-chairs in the toilet. Actually it is a disgraceful place. Dirty as our work is there are no decent facilities for washing—only cold water and one towel for hundreds of girls and women. Neither is any time allowed for washing purposes. Most of us therefore have to eat our dinners with filthy hands. And yet dirty hands are almost in keeping with the dinners which are supplied at the canteen for 8½d. or 9d. Fifty per cent. of this money is profit undoubtedly, for in all my life I, personally, have never eaten such disgusting stuff. However, one does not eat many dinners—for a learner's wage does not run to many. By dint of being extremely careful one may manage an 8½d. dinner on Monday, a 6d. one on Tuesday (no pudding), and a plate of rice and a cup of tea (2½d. the lot) for the rest of the week. We are both getting quite used to this "rice and tea"

menu after six weeks on a "learner's" wage. Anyhow, work it out—46½ hours at 6d. an hour is 23s. 3d., less insurance money. And, of course, the bonus! What did that suave old lady say at our interview—"4s. or 5s. a week." Well, my mate and I will swear both together on the Bible that we received in bonus 1s. the first week, 1s. 6d. the second week, and after that variable amounts between 2s. and 3s. Only once did we get above 3s.—3s. 3d. one week-end. I celebrated by buying a packet of woodbines! After that the bonus came tumbling down again and we began to realise what it feels like to be a shareholder and see your shares dropping. Down it came, 2s. 4d., 2s., 1s. 8d., 1s. 6d., and then to 1s. 3d. At that we discussed the matter in the toilet and ultimately persuaded the best speaker amongst us to go and speak to the boss about it. The next week the bonus went up by 4d., and that girl became, temporarily, a heroine.

Thus we two plod through our weary eight weeks of "learning," receiving only a little over 20s. for a job which we learnt in the first week. We are depressed by the acute monotony of our work, more depressed to find we are not allowed to talk, laugh or eat even sweets (worse than being at school!). On top of this is the intense speed-up, constantly increasing as Christmas draws near. One simply hasn't time to blow one's nose for hours on end. Stopping to blow one's nose or to wipe the dripping sweat off one's face means the valves are away round the machine again. More bullying!

Comes Christmas and the end of our apprenticeship. A sorry Christmas, for with 2½ days short we draw 16s. 9d. to live on the next week. Comes New Year, and business in the wireless trade slackens. Girls begin to whisper around us and look fearful. Who is going to get paid off? The boss comes round and asks how the learners have shaped. He talks to the under-manager, who only last week was heard to say: "These new girls are just a lot of silly cows." The next week-end a quarter of the learners are paid off; and the following week-end sees another quarter go. Many of them burst into tears. This is perhaps their first insurable job and they have only eight or nine stamps on. We who are left put our heads together and talk. It seems to us that it is nothing but a "racket." We are taken on for an eight weeks' season, paid a learner's wage for doing a regular hand's work, and then sacked just as we are due for an increase. We talk and discuss what we can do about it. Somebody whispers: "If only there was a Union here—" "Ssh—don't you remember what the boss said last time they gave Union bills out at the gate—" "Any girl joining the Union will be instantly dismissed." "Oh, shucks he did? I think we should join—"

In the canteen, in the toilet, in the cloak-room, we talk to girls from different shops in the factory. The first thing that strikes us is that

Women Workers in a Wireless Factory 757

girls from every "Distressed Area" in the country work in this factory. We soon get to know six from Glasgow, a dozen or so from Tyneside, a few from Durham colliery villages, and some merry Yorkshire lasses. Two new-comers are said to be from Wales, and one of the girls sacked last week was as Irish as a shamrock. These girls are practically all alone in London, trying to keep themselves on a wage of between 20s. and 25s. How can it be done? Some of them are paying 12s. 6d. for a room leaving 8s. for food, clothing and pocket money. How do they live? Well, some of them starve themselves. Some of them get into debt. And some of them go the way of Mary, who worked beside us until she left. She was a half-starved girl from the slums of a great northern town, stunted in stature and pale as death. She had good lodgings she told us, but couldn't keep them up. Eventually, she went to live in a cheaper place where she made the acquaintance of a number of girls who made better money than she did, and worked shorter hours. Mary wavered for a week or two between starvation and respectability on the one hand and good food, warm clothes and "the streets" on the other hand. Then one morning her seat was empty. Mary had made her decision.

But not all of them go Mary's road. Most of them cling to respectability and decency at the price of starvation—slow starvation. Girls coming from poverty-stricken homes in the north to lead an even more poverty-stricken life in London. London, the gay city, where a trip to the pictures means no dinner the next day.

So we girls who are left talk together and discuss what is to be done. Finally we decide that we must join the Union. Yes, and we must all join together. The Scotch girls agree, the Tynesiders agree, and so does London and Wales. We send word through to the other shop by our Yorkshire friends; word comes back the other shop agrees! All set, and we distribute hand-bills. Hand-bills in the canteen, in the toilet, on the benches. Hand-bills tucked in beside the valves in the trays. Everybody must know about the Union! There are still a few who don't. Then I get a brilliant idea. The girls who make the valve-bulbs themselves must place a bill inside each valve as they "blow" it. Then everyone will know: the public as well. 20,000 valves a day all with bills in them—we will tell all England.

"Come, wake up! Fancy falling asleep over the fire so soon! You should be ashamed of yourself. It's Gracie Fields on next—wake up! Wake up, Alice!" they all seem to shout together. "Wake up, Alice—have I been dreaming, then? Oh, what have I missed? Just a talk? That's all right." "Do you know, I dreamt I was making valves in a wireless factory. That all comes of you saying we needed a new valve. Good lord, it seemed so real!" But no, I wasn't dreaming. It was real.

I can remember everything so distinctly. *It is real !* I was working in a wireless factory, making valves. They said it was the largest wireless factory in the British Empire," we were making valves of all sorts for the "most popular set in the world" for 6d. an hour. I remember how hungry I was. We ate rice for our dinner like they do in India. Sometimes we had to work overtime, so that we made valves from eight in the morning till eight at night. Always the same work, and always faster and faster. It was terribly hot—we used to faint often—all for 6d. an hour.

" Say, you boys, where's that pile of Union leaflets. Fetch them out. Will you come with me to the factory gates to-morrow morning and give them out ? "

" Yes, we will ! "

" And will you help me turn that hell-hole into a decent Union shop ? "

" Sure we will. Let's start right now ! "

" Well, come on, boys ! Let's go now to win the girls—to win them for the Union ! "

LENIN AND GORKY

[We continue this month the series of *Lenin's Letters to Maxim Gorky*, which have been specially translated for the LABOUR MONTHLY.]

From *Collected Works*, Vol. XXIX, 2nd ed.

p. 22.

9.

To A. M. Gorky at Capri.
(1 August, 1912. Kraków.)

Krakau. Oesterreich.

Zwierzyniec 218. W1. Uljanow.

Dear A.M.,

I received your letter and that of the Siberians. My address now is not Paris, but Kraków—see above.

I did not quite understand from what party you were trying to chase me : surely not from the S.-R. ?

No, jesting apart, you have got a bad philistine bourgeois habit—of brushing things aside with : “ you are all squabblers.” Have a look at the new S.R. literature : “ Pochin,” “ Izvestia of the Emigrant Provincial Organisation,”—compare them with “ Revolutionrya Uisl,” with “ Revolutionrya Rossia,”—and then again with Ropshin, etc. Remember “ Viekhi ”¹ and the polemics (quasi-polemics) with them of Milyukov, Gredeskul (who has now discovered that a second revolution is not necessary in Russia), etc., etc.

Compare *all* this as a whole, *the whole* sum of the ideological tendencies of 1908-12 of the social-revolutionaries, the Trudoviks, the Bezzaglavites, the Cadets,² with what the social-democrats had and have. (Someone, at some time—probably an historian—will certainly undertake this work). You will see that *all*, literally all except the social-democrats, have been solving *the same*, literally the same, problems, on account of which little groups have seceded from our party towards liquidatorism and otzovism.

The bourgeois, the liberals, the S.R.'s love to scream about “ a squabble ” among the social-democrats ; they treat “ burning issues ” *lightly*, they trail behind the others, they play at diplomacy, they subsist on eclecticism. The difference between the social-democrats and all of them is that in the case of the social-democrats the squabbles conceal struggles between groups with *profound* and clear ideological roots, while in *their case* the squabble is outwardly smoothed over, but inwardly is empty, petty and paltry. Never, and not for anything would I exchange

the sharp struggle of tendencies among the social-democrats for the suave emptiness and poverty of the social-revolutionaries and Co.

I warmly shake your hand, yours

LENIN.

P.S.—Greetings to M.F.

P.S.—But in Russia there is a *revolutionary* upsurge, not any other, but literally revolutionary. And we have succeeded after all in starting a daily *Pravda*, owing, among other things, to that same (January)³ conference which the fools are howling at.

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Printed from the manuscript.

p. 25.

10.

To A. M. Gorky at Capri.
(August-September, 1912. Kraków.)

Dear A.M.,

If you admit that “our squabble is caused by an irreconcilable difference of ideological roots”—that it is so with the S.R.’s also—(that it is so with the Cadets also)—“Viekhi”—you did not add that, but there is no doubt about it)—that a *reformist* (happy word!) party is in process of formation—then it is *impossible* to say both to the liquidator and to his enemy: “You are both squabblers.”

Then it is the duty of those who have understood the ideological roots of “the squabble,” without taking part in it, to help the masses *to seek for the roots* and not to justify the masses in considering the disputes as “a personal affair of the generals.”

We “leaders have not written one clear book, not one big pamphlet” . . . That is not true. They have written as best they could. Not less clearly, not less ably than formerly. And they have written a lot. There were cases when they wrote against people without *any* “squabble” (against “Viekhi”), against Chernov, Rozhkov, and so on. Do you see all the issues of “The Nevskaya Zvezda”? “The result of this is that there are in Russia at present among the workers very many good . . . youngsters, but they are so furious in their attitude to those abroad.” . . . This is true as a fact, but it is not the result of the “leaders’” fault, but of the isolation, or rather the *rupture*, of Russia from the emigrant centres. The *rupture* has got to be healed, but to scold the leaders is cheap, playing to the gallery, and of little use . . . “which dissuades the workers from participating in the conference.”

What conference? The one now being called by the liquidators?⁴ In that case, we also dissuade! Haven’t you some misapprehension there?

I read that in a Warsaw newspaper Amfiteatrov very nearly declared himself in favour of a boycott of the Fourth Duma? Have you got this article? Send it to me—I will return it.

But things are seething in the Baltic fleet! I was visited in Paris (*entre nous*) by a special delegate sent by a meeting of sailors and social democrats. There is no organisation—it simply makes one want to weep! If you have any officer connections, every effort should be made to remedy this. The sailors are in fighting mood, but they can all perish again to no purpose.

But then there are your unfortunate articles in *Zaprogi Zhizni*. It's a queer journal, by the way—liquidatorish—Trudovik—Vekhist. But then, it is precisely a "reformist party without social divisions . . . "

You ask why I am in Austria. The Central Committee has set up the bureau here (*entre nous*): the frontier is near and we'll make use of the circumstance; it is nearer to Petersburg, whence we get papers on the third day; it is much easier to write to the papers there; it is easier to organise collaboration. There are fewer squabbles here, that's on the credit side. There's no good library, that's a debit. Life is difficult without books.

I warmly shake your hand, yours,

LENIN.

Greetings to M.F.

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p. 29.

12.

To A. M. Gorky at Capri.
(6 November, 1912. Kraków.)

Dear A.M.,

Some days ago I received a letter from the editorial board of *Pravda* in Petersburg, in which they asked me to write to you that they would be extremely glad to have your regular collaboration. "We would like to offer Gorky 25 kopeks a line, but we are afraid he might be offended"—this is what they write to me.

In my view there is nothing in this to give offence. No one can ever think that your collaboration would change under the influence of considerations of payment. Just as everybody knows that the workers' *Pravda*, which usually pays 2 kopeks a line and more often nothing, is not generally able to attract anyone by its fees.

There is nothing bad "but good" in the fact that collaborators in a workers' paper should receive something at least. The circulation is

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now 20—25 thousand. It is time to begin thinking of a stable basis in regard to the payment of collaborators. What is there bad about it if little by little *all* who work for a workers' paper begin to earn? And what offence can there be in this proposal?

I am convinced that the fears of the Petersburg editorial board of *Pravda* are quite groundless and that you will receive its proposal not otherwise than in a comradely fashion. Drop a line either direct to the editorial board or to me.

To-morrow the election of electors in Petersburg (for the workers' electoral college) will take place.⁵ The struggle with the liquidators has blazed up. In Moscow and Kharkov the party men have won.

Have you seen *Luch*, and do you receive it at all? How they have cooked their cards and pretended to be "good people!"

I have seen the advertisement of Krugozor. Is that your enterprise, or are you only a guest there?

I warmly shake your hand and wish you health most of all. Greetings to M.F.

Yours,

LENIN.

47 Ulica Lubormiskiego, Krakau.

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Printed from the manuscript.

P. 31.

13.

To A. M. Gorky at Capri.
(23 December, 1912. Kraków.)

Dear A.M.,

I have had no word from you for a long time. How are you getting on? Are you well?

To-day I have received No. 187 of *Pravda* with the subscription form for 1913. The affairs of the paper are in a bad way, after the summer fall in the circulation the rise is *very* slow, and the deficit remains. Temporarily they have even stopped paying two permanent collaborators, thus making our situation super-difficult.

We propose to develop increased agitation among the workers for *subscriptions*, so as to stabilise and enlarge the paper with the money collected; otherwise, with the beginning of the Duma, there will be no space left for articles.

I hope you will also take part in the agitation for subscribers, so as to help "give a push" to the paper. In what form? If you have a tale

or something suitable, then the announcement of this would be very good propaganda. If not, then send a promise to give one in the near future, and definitely, in 1913. Finally, simply a few lines of your *Letter to the Workers* on the importance of *actively* supporting (by subscription, distribution and collections) a workers' paper would also be excellent propaganda.

Please send a line one way or the other direct to the editorial board of *Pravda* (Yamskaya 2, St. Petersburg), or to me here, Uljanow (47. Lubomirskiego. Krakau).

There certainly will not be war, and we shall stay here for the present, "making use of" the Poles' desperate hate for Tsarism.

The liquidators are now attacking revolutionary strikes! That's where they've got to. There is talk of a strike and demonstration on 9 January.

For the first time in three Dumas (II., III. and IV.), all six of the workers' deputies from the chief provinces are on the side of the party. Things are difficult, but nevertheless the work goes forward.

Did you see "the defence" of Ropshin in "Zavieti" in the name of "freedom of thought and criticism?" (In answer to Natanson and Co.'s letter to the editorial board.) Surely that's worse than any sort of liquidatorism,—renegadism that is muddled, cowardly, wriggling and nevertheless systematic!¹⁶

We swim "against the stream" . . . *For* revolutionary agitation among the masses, one now has to fight against very many "also-revolutionaries." . . . There is undoubtedly a revolutionary mood among the working masses, but the new democratic (including worker) intelligentsia, with a revolutionary ideology is growing up slowly, it lags behind and hasn't yet caught up.

Best greetings! Drop me a line.

Yours,

LENIN.

P.S.—Greetings to M.F. For some reason she has become completely silent.

First published in 1924 in *Lenin Symposium*, I.

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NOTES.

1. All these four journals were issued by various sections of the Social Revolutionary Party, and represented various tendencies. Ropshin's (Boris Savinkov, a leading Social Revolutionary) "Kon Bledny," dealing with the life of revolutionaries, had been published in 1909. "Viekhi" was a miscellany issued by a group of counter-revolutionary intelligentsia.

2. "Trudoviks," a group gathered around the small semi-socialist journal, *Trud*. "Beszaglavites," the group responsible for the weekly journal, *Bez Zaglavie*, issued in 1906, standing for "critical socialism," but in reality being much more to the right.

3. January Conference: An All-Russian Party (Bolshevik) conference was held in Prague in January, 1912. The conference was bitterly attacked by the Trotskyists, Jewish Bund, and other groups in a separate conference held in Paris in March of the same year.

4. The "August bloc," organised by Trotsky and including 'Trotskyists, Mensheviks, the "Vperiod" group, the Jewish "Bund," etc., summoned a "Conference of the organisation of the R.S.D.R.P." in Vienna in August, 1912, in opposition to the Bolshevik Party conference which had been held in the previous January.

5. The preliminary elections for the fourth Duma. See note in previous series of Lenin letters (LABOUR MONTHLY, 1936.

6. Ropshin (Boris Savinkov) had written a novel, "That which never was," which was being published in the S.R. organ *Zavieti*. Its openly renegade and defeatist quality evoked protests from S.R.'s themselves, including Natanson. The editorial board of the journal defended their action in printing it on the grounds of "freedom of thought and criticism," etc.

DEBT FUND.

				£	s.	d.
Previously Acknowledged	..	..	..	134	9	1
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BOOK REVIEWS

IN EUROPE.

The Balkans and Europe, a Study of Peace and the Forces of War. By Doros Alastos. (The Bodley Head.) 7s. 6d.

WORLD tension was suddenly and dangerously increased by the conclusion on November 6 of the Tripartite Agreement against the Communist International. This Pact has brought nearer the danger of world war. One of its parties, Japan, has already moved nearly a million of her soldiers to the Asiatic mainland. The other Contracting Parties, Italy and Germany, are subversively intriguing, and looking for assistance to Central and South-Eastern Europe. It will be possible for them to obtain the oil and raw materials necessary for war industries in the Balkans. The author believes that the Fascist States will not venture to unleash war unless assured at least of Balkan neutrality, if not Balkan aid, and he describes in this book the policy which the Fascist Powers are pursuing in the different Balkan States, where they have already gained a foothold, Italy in Albania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, and Germany in Greece.

The Balkan Governments are bewildered and perturbed. They cannot understand the hesitancy of British Foreign Policy. London has buzzed with Balkan visitors. Mr. Stoyadinovitch, Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, paid an official visit to London in October. In November King Boris of Bulgaria and King George of Greece were both here. The King of Roumania is expected in the New Year.

It is estimated that over £400,000,000 of foreign capital is invested in the Balkan countries. After the war heavy borrowing by Greece and Bulgaria was directed mainly to the relief of refugees; Yugoslavia and Rumania, though borrowing ostensibly for railway and heavy industrial development, used the loans for armaments.

Doros Alastos explains how extravagantly the Allied and Associated Powers overestimated Bulgaria's economic resources. The original sum of which payment was demanded by the Treaty of Neuilly was 2,250,000,000 gold francs. This was scaled down to 550 millions in 1923 and subsequently suspended so that with the exception of Albania, Bulgaria to-day has the smallest foreign debt of all the Balkan countries, whose freedom is restricted by their foreign indebtedness. Political interference by the moneylending countries is general, and foreign influence is extended under the cloak of economic concessions.

Prior to the war the railways in the Balkans were constructed and maintained almost exclusively by foreign capital. For political reasons no railway was built across Serbia to link the Adriatic with the Aegean, and Turkey refused to allow the union of the Greek railway system with the European by a line through Turkish territory. The lines owned before the war by the Central Powers are now owned by the Balkan States, and to-day practically all the railway systems are State property. Electrification offers to foreign capital an opportunity similar to that presented by railway construction in the nineteenth century. Electrical undertakings in Yugoslavia have been financed by French, Belgian, Swiss, Austrian and German capital. Franco-Belgian capital has supplied Bucharest with electricity. The same concern obtained the concession to

extend the power system of Sofia. A British company electrified Athens and Piræus, while the water supply is in the hands of an American company.

"The German resurrection of the *Drang nach Osten* slogan," says Doros Alastos, "is a major symptom of contemporary European disturbance, and owing to the inevitable political interference by which alone it can be sustained, it offers the most ominous possibilities of upsetting the precarious European equilibrium. Europe has enslaved the Balkans financially and politically, but at the same time she has committed herself to the Balkanic entanglement from which she would find it exceedingly difficult to extricate herself."

Economically the Balkan lands are to-day bound more closely to Germany and Italy than to Western Europe. But Germany has overreached herself. In Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia she has paid for her purchases of raw materials with goods of poor quality, sometimes even with unwanted goods, at comparatively high prices, so that the Balkan peoples are dissatisfied with the whole system of international trade introduced by the German clearing system.

For years the British Government has felt an embarrassment which grew in proportion to the rising insistency of Hitler on the need for restoring Germany's colonial Empire. Suddenly came the information from Berlin that Herr Hitler was ready, if he received the slightest encouragement, to offer Britain a ten years' "truce" on the Colonial issue. During the truce the question of Colonies would not be raised. In return, however, for such a concession Herr Hitler would expect the British Government to grant him a free hand in Central and Eastern Europe. Britain did not miss this opportunity. Viscount Halifax, Lord President of the Council, accepted the invitation which he had received as a Master of Foxhounds to visit the Hunting Exhibition in Berlin, organised by General Goering, and it was announced in that false but pompous tone which is nothing but a disservice to British diplomacy that during his "entirely private and unofficial visit" to Germany he would see Herr Hitler. The German idea of a "free hand" in Central Europe is that Britain should not intervene if:

- (1) Germany pressed for a plebiscite in Austria.
- (2) Germany presented a demand to Czechoslovakia for the immediate recognition of the right of the German minority in that country to administrative autonomy within the State, and to cultural unity with the people of the German Reich.

Such a demand would at once subject the terms of the agreements between the States of the Little Entente and the States parties to the Balkan Pact to the supreme test. The Revisionist States would tremble with excitement. The peace of Europe would be definitely at stake.

Doros Alastos, the publication of whose book is appropriately timed, has filled a gap in English literature on the Balkans, by covering the period from the formation of the Balkan League in 1912 down to the present day. This League which enabled its members to destroy the domination of their Ottoman oppressor did not prevent them from subsequently attacking each other in the second Balkan war. Regional and economic interests drew them together again, but the Great Powers disrupted the natural movement towards friendship and understanding among the Balkan peoples who in unity had freed themselves from the Turkish yoke, and forced on South-Eastern Europe the fatal policy of the "balance of power," with the result that the Balkans became one of the chief battlefields of the World War.

The Peace Terms left the Balkan States with claims unsatisfied and a host of National Minorities. The Fascist Powers have skilfully exploited Balkan ambitions and deceptions. In each of the Balkan States the alleged Communist peril has been made the pretext for martial law, abolition of civil rights, dictatorship and terror.

This book should be read by all who are interested in European politics, and especially by those who may have lost interest in Balkan developments since the post-war settlements. History repeats itself, and in order to utilise every opportunity of averting the danger of war it is necessary to be perfectly acquainted with the series of events which led to the signature of the Balkan Pact of February 9, 1934, between Greece, Rumania, Turkey and Yugoslavia, and accurately to appraise the relativity of policy of the members of the Little Entente and their Allies, and of the signatories of the Pact.

REGINALD BRIDGEMAN.

YOUTH IN INDUSTRY.

Youth in British Industry. John Gollan. (Gollancz and Lawrence & Wishart). 6s.

THIS book should be compulsory reading for every T.U. official and Executive member. The publishers' summary states that it enables the reader to "see more vividly the problem facing youth to-day." This is undoubtedly true, but only states part of the truth.

To read the book is to understand that the main problems of the "adult" in industry find there source in the problems of youth. As the youth grows to manhood, he carries his "problem" with him, but changed in form. Like the youth himself, the problem has "matured."

The youth, speeded up, confined to one simple repetition process in rationalised industry, his training sacrificed for "output," has, as his inevitable counterpart, the unemployed skilled man. Or, the youth himself growing to manhood, only semi-trained, threatened with displacement, faced on the one hand with the competition of the "youth" pressing behind him, and on the other hand with the prejudice of the "skilled craftsman." He becomes the unemployed adult, or the "unorganised" adult, working for sweated wages.

Two fundamental problems confront the Trade Unions to-day. The organisation of youth in industry and the organisation of the semi-skilled adult working at low wages on work that was recently considered part of the skilled craftsman's work. This book will enable those holding responsible positions in the T.U. Movement to see the problem from a new angle, and should do much to overcome the antagonism that unfortunately exists between the skilled worker who sees the "youth" as an undercutting competitor, instead of seeing that both he and the youth are victims of the same social forces.

Mr. Gollan reveals with a wealth of detail both the terrible consequences in individual suffering entailed, and the widespread social disintegration involved in the increasing exploitation of youth in industry. The disregard of Health and Education, the long hours, the growth of blind alley occupations, the lack of cultural facilities, hypocrisy of the Government's Health Campaigns, in fact the general sacrifice of the interests of youth to profits is shown with

a wealth of statistical data and quotations that must impress all except those who are blind because they do not wish to see.

In his final chapters will be found a programme for youth that could well become the basis for a wide discussion of the problem in T.U. circles. Coming as it does when splendid work has begun in this field by the London Trades Council and the Engineering apprentices, John Gollan's book will provide the necessary information on which a big organising and agitation work can be initiated.

J. R. SHANLEY.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

- The Fight for the Charter.* Neil Stewart. (Chapman & Hall.) 6s. 272 pp.
Fils Du Peuple. Maurice Thorez. (Editions Sociales Internationales.) 10fr. 224 pp.
Grey Children. James Hanley. (Methuen.) 7s. 6d. 230 pp.
Russia with Open Eyes. Paul Winterton. (Lawrence & Wishart Ltd.) 1s. 48 pp.
Twenty Years After : Life To-day in the U.S.S.R. H. Lee. (Lawrence & Wishart Ltd.) 3s. 6d. 172 pp.
Here I Lie. Alex Thompson. (Routledge.) 15s. 323 pp.
 "Chokey" by Red Collar Man. (Gollancz.) 6s. 208 pp.
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